CHAPTER I

THE MURNGIN

The northern shores of Australia are separated in the east from New 131
Guinea by the Torres Strait and the Gulf of Carpentaria, and in the
west by the shallow Sea of Arafura. The Indian Ocean lies between
Australia and the East Indian island of Timor. Below the Arafura is
Arnhem Land, that almost blank space on the map which extends
from the Gulf of Carpentaria to the Indian Ocean. In the furthermost 101
northern and eastern parts of this latter region are several tribes which
may be referred to collectively as the Murngin. Their ancestors lived
here many hundreds and probably thousands of years before them.[1]

Eastern and northern Arnhem Land are unpopulated by whites 177
except for a half dozen or more missionaries who are stationed at three
comparatively recent Christian outposts. Traders infrequently sail 139
their two-masted luggers into the shallow harbors and mouths of the
tidal rivers to exchange their goods with the natives; all other economic
efforts have been unprofitable. On the southern borders of this huge
territory white civilization is making a melancholy and profitless effort
to implant its own markings in the form of cattle ranches on the bleak
country that lies along the southern banks of the Roper River. A telegraph system which unites white Australia with the rest of the British
Empire stretches from the populous cities of southern Australia across
the barren central desert into the western border of Arnhem Land and
terminates at the tiny, isolated town of Port Darwin.

The Murngin live some ten to fifteen degrees south of the equator in 133
a land which has little elevation. The climate is tropical and marked by 132
the sharp, seasonal cycles of the rainy and dry periods, with corresponding changes in the prevailing winds or monsoons. The long flat coastal 133
regions have a savanna type of vegetation, with the ubiquitous man- 137
grove here and there forming dense jungle groves along the flat sandy
islands, bays, and tidal rivers. The groves of ti trees in this region are
green oases which the native sees as he journeys in from the barren

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[1] See Appendix I, Social Change in North Australia.

does consider his ritualistic objects necessary aids to hunting and 181 gathering activities, they are not directly used; and while ceremonial 796 string and the smaller objects are frequently kept after a ritual, the larger objects are ceremonially destroyed by burial or fire, for which, it is most likely, the burden of carrying them is largely responsible. The natives give a mythological reason, and the concept of destruction does fit into the ideas underlying the ceremony; but the destruction was undoubtedly influenced by the necessity of either carrying or destroying a heavy object to prevent women from seeing it.

Whether the Murngin's position as nomadic hunters and gatherers 177 can be historically explained by their having been out of contact with the main centers of civilization and therefore not having risen to the horticultural stage and acquired permanent residence, seems to the writer open to argument. The Cape York Peninsula people had constant communication with the New Guinea horticulturalists, yet did not acquire horticulture as a mode of earning a living, even though they did borrow many other elements from the New Guinea culture. Although the Malays must have been in contact with North Australia for a long period of time, the Murngin again took over only a very small part of their rather extensive material culture.

II. Man, a Species in a Biological Configuration

1. *Man, the Animal, Relating Himself to Nature*

Murngin man is but one species in the general biological configuration of plants and animals which is in constant state of adjustment to the inorganic world. This human animal is from one point of view a purely environmental thing in the same way that a eucalyptus tree, a mangrove jungle, and a species of kangaroo, etc., form the natural environment in which a Murngin lives. It is only by a process of abstracting man from the rest of the organic and inorganic world that we see him as a separate creature and create the useful dichotomy of heredity and environment. 000

The Murngin native eats, drinks, sleeps, excretes, copulates and reproduces his kind, is born and dies, as do the dingo, the kangaroo, or the other animals who move over the land with him. He affects his environmental world, but it largely controls his behavior; and, generally speaking, his place in the natural economy is largely the same as, let us say, that of the kangaroo, which is an idea the Murngin take as axiomatic. The kangaroo has his peculiar set of articulations

764 around the same way we sing. That food the relatives of that dead
115 man give me when I sing this song so I can take those smoking leaves and put them in the fire and chase that spirit away and so we can go out hunting and that spirit will not bother us."

764 The living relatives talk to the recent dead both before burial and after, and continue until the bones have been exhumed, painted, and placed in the hollow log for their final interment.

764 In preparing the body for burial by painting the totemic design of the man's clan upon its chest and abdomen, one man usually stands
533 by with his singing sticks and leads the singing while the others paint. He sings a list of garma songs, including a list of the paints being used in decorating the body. He then sings string and bark for tying up the body in a paper-bark coffin. The singing continues while the paper bark is being placed over the body and tied into position. When this operation is completed the singer sings the red cloud element in the song sequence, which is a symbol of the end of the song and of the operation.

764 *The Mast Ceremony.*—The relatives then call out for all the people
533 to appear. They sing a new song cycle, the first element in which is a ship's mast that belonged to a Wongar Macassar.[4] Two or more men
177 pick up the dead body and move it up and down as though they were lifting a mast. The chorus sings "Oh—a—ha—la!!" while the "mast" is laid down. When it is picked up again they sing

"O—o—o—o—a—ha—la!
A—ha—la!!
A—ha—la!!"

764 "The Macassar mast was like that," said my informant while view-
177 ing a burial ceremony with me. "Macassar man sang out when he raised a mast and when he did that all of us black men ran from our camps to see him go because all of us knew then that the Macassar was ready to go away. Some people would say, 'What's the matter with those Macassars, what are they doing?' and other people would say, 'Oh, they are going to another place because their mast is standing up straight.' This is all the same as that dead man because he is ready to go away. We people say the same thing about him. 'What is the matter with him?' and it is like that dead man saying back, 'I am standing up straight now, I am going away.' It is like an old Wongar

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[4] For a full account of the influence of the Malay culture on the Murngin, see Social Change in North Australia, Appendix I.

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Macassar man saying, 'I want to go over that sundown way, my grandfather is there.' "

Two men stand over the body, each with one hand over his face and one hand thrust out straight over "the mast." The first two men continue to move the "mast" up and down. Within the circle of relatives watching the ceremony and part of the center of attention are two other men who dance as though they were pulling on ropes that raise the mast. All the people are very quiet. The singing sticks continue to beat, but they accentuate the general quietness of the group. Two men in unison say what the natives believe to be a Macassar prayer (Djel-la-war, Malay term): 764 [535 [177]

"Si-li-la-mo-ha-mo ha-mo-sil-li-li,"
(A native who had been with the Macassars and who understood some English because of recent mission contact said, "This is just the same as amen.")
"Si-li-nai-yu ma-u-lai,"
("They are asking something in the clouds or maybe it is in the moon.")
"Ra-bin-a-la la-ha-ma-ha-ma,"
("They ask again for something from that man god who lives in the moon.")
"Ser-ri ma-kas-si,"
(Save man,)
"Bel-la bel-la,"
(Watch,)
"Daung,"
(Me from that danger thing.)

"The Macassar man sang that when the mast broke or when a man was about to die."

After the two men have prayed in unison, the chorus cries, "Djil-li-le!" There is a repetition of the prayer, and the chorus once more cries, "Djil-li-le!" which is supposed to be the cry of the Macassar sailors when they made the mast stand up straight and it was finally attached to the deck. The last time the Djil-li-le is cried out it is continued with Li-li-li-li, which means that the anchor is up. The singing stick now speeds up its rhythm for the putting of the sail on the mast. All the people now start a very grotesque fast dance with first one leg bent at an extreme angle high in the air, and then the other, the arms going through the motion of pulling ropes on a sail. The dancing, all of which is supposed to belong to the Wongar Macassar men, con- [535]

the dirt but the marikmo can pick him out and take him away. The 764 earth is heaped over the body, grass is put on top and, at times, stones. 775 Everyone leaves then and eats his evening meal.

A man is buried by his people so that he will rot and the flesh can 764 be prepared for removal from the bones. The people who bury their dead say they do it so they won't have to see him rot.

(In platform burial the body is placed face upward so that when 764 the abdominal wall breaks the intestines will not fall. The platform is 769 not torn down when a body is removed. It is always avoided thereafter, although the feeling is rather slight about it. Ordinarily women feel a greater sense of taboo about it than men. They always pass by at some little distance because "they are afraid that that mokoi is still there." The men, when they are with the women, sometimes tease them by grunting and coughing like mokois, and laugh when the women jump. The women laugh too, but usually not until later.)

The men then call out the names of the dead male mari and marikmo 764 of the dead man. The groups, singing, quarrel with the people for what they did to the deceased, and the dead ancestors are supposed to blame the living for not taking better care of the dead person when he was alive. While this singing is going on, the chorus dances with spears [535 and knives to simulate a fight between the living and the dead. Once 533] more the garma cycle of songs is sung. The people then clap their hands, symbolical of the Macassar drum, and finally the red cloud element in the garma sequence is sung to indicate that the ceremony is over.

The Grave Post.—The next day, or a few days after the burial, the 764 grave post is erected and a mast of a Macassar design is also placed 177 over the grave. Both the grave post and the mast are carried through the camp while a Murngin version of a Macassar prayer is said over it and the chorus sing a response to the prayer. Food is begged from all 764 the members of the camp who are not participating as near relatives in the ceremony. All the male relatives of the deceased who are later 302 ceremonially to eat the food in ritual communion, paint themselves. The designs are those of the totem of the man who died, which usually means the totem of all the men engaged in the ceremony except those on the mother's side of the kinship group. When a Warumeri dies, for example, the men paint themselves as whales just as the dead body has been painted and as his totemic emblem and poles are painted. The post also announces to the ancestors that the body is buried beneath it.

121 127 V. Application of the Douglass tree-ring method.[2] This was attempted unsuccessfully in an effort to date more exactly Malay intrusion into North Australia by examining the growth rings of the tamarind trees which were brought to the shores of the Arafura and the Gulf of Carpentaria by the Malay traders.

Observation of Certain Historical Processes

177 852 The Gunabibi is not found in any of the clans around Arnhem and Buckingham Bays or among the island peoples of the northeast; but large numbers of the men from these districts go south to the clans that have this ceremony and participate there. Certain features of the Gunabibi are not observed by these northern visitors, particularly the exchange of wives since they do not bring their wives with them. The Gunabibi is thought of as a southern and western ceremony. Leaders from the Rainbarngo come to the Goyder River country to assist in its direction. The Liaalaomir and surrounding clans, however, have it as an organized part of their ceremonial life. The process of diffusion, as it is observable in this case, has two elements in it: (1) the clans on the edges of its distribution tend to assimilate it, and (2) the clans farther away tend to accept it in that their men go to its celebrations, which means that a large group of men are Gunabibi initiates in areas where it is not a part of the total clan behavior. Because of its distribution among the more remote northern clans and simultaneous contacts with the general distribution of the Gunabibi, this rite is diffusing very rapidly and promises to cover the whole of the Murngin area within the next few years.

The rapidity of its diffusion is aided by the operation of a cultural selective factor: the ceremony itself is but a slight variation of the Djungguan and is dependent on the same Wawilak myth for its logic. It also emphasizes with greater clarity and satisfaction the ideas of fertility latent or explicit in all the large Murngin rituals; this would tend to make it attractive and exciting to their thinking and emotions and make them see it as "more inside" (that is, the further inside the men's ceremonial grounds one goes, the more sacred the mysteries become).

177 852 304 In the Roper River area the Gunabibi is associated with subincision but in the northern Murngin area it is not. Subincision is diffusing into this area as a part of the general complex, but is not a ritual element; and it is treated by the people who accept it as a separate custom, although they know that it is a part of the general Gunabibi configuration in the south. It seems probable that, in no great length of time, the two will be reassociated because the subincision songs are sung at the present time in the

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[2] Douglass, Andrew E., "Dating Our Prehistoric Ruins; How Growth Rings in Timbers Aid in Establishing the Relative Ages of the Ruined Pueblos of the Southwest," *Natural History*, 1921, Vol. XVI, pages 27-30.

Gunabibi sequences and many of the men and the leaders who sing them are at present subincised.[3] 177

The ceremonial life of the Murngin seems to be constantly enriched by cultural waves coming from the south—that is, from Central Australia— as will be demonstrated when we examine their burial customs from an historical point of view. The technological borrowings, of recent times at least, are from the seacoast and not from the inland. We must turn to the Malay contacts to see what traits have been taken and by what cultural processes they have been chosen from the contact of the Malay traders from the north and west. 852 304

Malay Influence on the Aboriginal Cultures of Northeastern Arnhem Land

The Malays, from an early date, made yearly voyages down through the East Indian Islands and through the Arafura Sea to the northern coast of Australia. Their prows sailed into many harbors and river mouths that indent the coast, from the Victoria River, which flows into the Indian Ocean in West Australia, to the southern limits of the Gulf of Carpentaria in the east. 175

Sir Matthew Flinders, in the second volume of his *Voyage to Terra Australis*, reports having seen first evidences of the Malays in the Pellew Islands.[4] He next speaks of them when he was anchored at Caledon

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[3] The people to the south and west of the Murngin practice subincision. It seems to have a distribution that projects up the Goyder River to the Crocodile Islands. The following people practice it; Rainbarngo, the people around Cape Stewart, the Djinba, Ritarngo, the Marunga Island people (some do, some do not—it is a matter of personal choice), and the Burera (a matter of personal choice). None of the people east of them go through this ordeal except a few who have made long visits to the people west and south of them and have gone through the Gunabibi ceremony. In the more northern parts of the subincision distribution the cutting is unritualized. Two men go out and stand in a river or pool to above their waists. One takes a sharp stone knife and splits the urethra of the other; either at the same time or later, the one who has been cut reciprocates by performing the same operation on his friend. Farther south, subincision is a definite part of the Gunabibi ceremony. Clitoridectomy also seems to be practiced in this ceremony by these southern peoples. It seems likely that if other factors do not disturb the culture, the subincision element of the Gunabibi will spread into northeastern Arnhem Land and become a part of the ritual within this area. Many of the people at the present day sing a subincision song as part of the ceremony even though they do not go through the ordeal. 171

[4] Page 172—"Pellew Group: December, 1802: Indications of some foreign people having visited this group were almost as numerous, and as widely extended as those left by the natives. Besides pieces of earthen jars and trees cut with axes, we found remnants of bamboo lattice work, palm leaves sewed with cotton thread into the form of such hats as are worn by the Chinese, and the remains of blue cotton trousers, of the fashion called moormans. A wooden anchor of one fluke, and three boats' rudders of violet wood were also found; but what puzzled me most was a collection of stones piled together in a line, resembling a low wall, with short lines running perpendicularly at the back, dividing the space behind into compartments. In each of these

population occupied a site for the entire year. No Malay women were 175
allowed to accompany the men on their southern voyages. With the exception of the tamarind tree and possibly the bamboo, no flora of the East Indies were deliberately transplanted to the northern coast of Australia. The Malays did not engage in any form of agriculture here. Although they brought rice for trade with the aborigines, none was ever planted by them or the natives. It may be possible that two cocoanut palm trees reported by the natives of the Kolpa clan of Cape Wessel Island were planted by the western trader, but it is also possible that the two trees sprouted from cocoanuts carried in by the tides, which bring hundreds of these nuts to the shores of northern Arnhem Land.[9]

The Malay traders made these long trips from their native islands to 175
Australia because they wanted to acquire the native pearl shell, pearls, 439
tortoise shell, trepang, and sandal wood, found all along the shores of North Australia. The natives received in return dugout canoes, rice, 177
molasses, tobacco, cloth for sarongs, belts, knives, tomahawks, gin, and pipes, as well as other articles of trade. The Malay did not come to establish outposts of his civilization and promote agriculture, nor had he any desire to proselytize the aborigines to worship his gods; he came to trade for highly valued articles on which the natives placed little value, and when he had accomplished his purpose he was glad to go home to Macassar, Koepang, or Timor Laut. Consequently he had little effect on the native civilization or its racial stock.

The various head men of the coastal clans were made "kings" by Malay traders. Usually the brother of the "king" was also made a "king" to assist his older brother—apparently a Malay adaptation of native custom, since the ceremonial leader of a clan usually has his younger brother to assist him. The head men were put in charge of their clansmen in the trepang expeditions. Friendships grew up between various Malays and aborigines to the extent that the black fathers took their young sons down to the Malay boats and pointed out the men who were to be their trading friends when they were grown up. This indicates a tendency to organize the trade on the basis of the patrilineal line, which again shows that the Malays did not attempt to change native civilization, but merely adapted themselves to the native social institutions.

The gin traded to the natives caused occasional great drunken orgies, [273]
and much blood was shed in interclan fights that came to a head under this alcoholic stimulation. However, the alcohol seems to have had no effect upon the general well-being of the people.

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[9] The ocean currents are exceptionally rapid in the Arafura Sea and the distances of no great length from cocoanut-growing areas, which makes it highly possible that of the tens of thousands of nuts washed ashore through the years, two of them might have taken root. Recent researches have shown that cocoanuts can remain in sea water for a considerable period of time without losing their germinating power.

175 Many of the black men went back to the Malay country with the returning fleets and stayed through the intervening season. There are a few cases of men who stayed permanently and married Malay women, but this was very rare.

The Malays also bought spears and spear-throwers from the blacks, but it is likely that this was done in modern times because of their interest in them as mementos rather than weapons.

175 The trade with the Malays seems to have been purely on a basis of
exchange, with very little else in its social content. Nevertheless, it had
177 little effect on the aboriginal ideas of trade. The Murngin trade is fairly
439 extensive. The native sometimes exchanges things he possesses for the
things he needs and cannot get from his own territory; but the larger
438 basis of trade in northeastern Arnhem Land is one of social reciprocity
which establishes a social bond between the traders and enlarges the social
periphery of each. A trade between two people is considerably ritualized,
and may be an exchange of the same objects, such as carved spears, spear-
throwers, or baskets.

All this again shows the strong resistance of the Murngin culture to outside influence. The Malay trader came for an exchange of goods and nothing else; and it would be thought that, in the hundreds of years he is likely to have been in Arnhem Land, he would have given a new impetus to Murngin ideas of exchange. But as far as can be determined, the Murngin ideas are no different from what they were before he arrived, since the trade life fits into the general setting of their culture. Further, this system of exchange is no different from that of the interior tribes, and it is still not a matter of pure economics, but is of more significance to the social and ritualistic life of the people.

175 *Malay Influence on the Aboriginal Material Culture.*—Although the
influence of the Malay was of no great importance, nevertheless it had
177 considerable influence upon certain aspects of the material culture of the
tribes who occupied the coastal plains along the Arafura Sea and the
western shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria.

In brief, the Malay introduced the dugout canoe, its mast and pandanus sail, the Malay type of pipe, a fashion for cutting the beard in a kind of Van Dyke style, and an appreciation for iron and other metals. It is possible the tides had carried in wooden planks with metal on them before the Malay arrived in Australia, for at the present time the natives often find planks with nails, which they extract and use for fish hooks. The tomahawk was also brought into North Australia and became a part of the native culture, partly supplanting, along the coast, the ground stone axe. It was, of course, not made by the Australians. The technique of grinding a stone axe is still known by the men of these tribes. The metal axes did not come in sufficient number to supply all the needs of the

natives. It is unlikely that many iron axes ever reached the interior peoples; 175
and the proximity of stone and the native's tendency to lose his implements 177
(which necessitates constant replacements) greatly contributed to the continuation of this stone-axe technique in the aboriginal culture.

The dugout canoe used by the natives possesses no outrigger; but it is 175
a fairly well-shaped boat and is much superior to the indigenous bark 177
canoe that the native had used as his chief means of water transport before 501
the arrival of the Malay. The Malays who traded with the Australians used the double outrigger. Some of the present-day natives know how to make an outrigger, but this addition to the dugout was not appreciated by the more conservative aborigines, and never became part of their culture. It is likely that this was due to the influence of their own bark canoe. This latter boat lacked an outrigger, and it was easier and simpler to learn how to manage a dugout canoe without an outrigger than to learn how to operate one with it.

Judging from the direct evidence of the natives who were alive at the 177
time when the Malays were still coming to North Australia, it is probable 501
that the blacks did not manufacture their own dugouts until the white Australian government sent its gunboats up to the western entrance of the Arafura Sea and prevented Malay trade with the black natives. Several informants reported that when the last consignment of canoes was eventually broken up, all of the people went back to bark canoes, but that a few of the men from the English Company Islands had learned how to make the dugout, and the manufacture of this type of boat was learned from them. This story seems likely, for the termination of the Malay voyages occurred when several of the informants were old enough to observe and to remember the exact circumstances. Groote Eylandt and Caledon Bay were also concentration points of the Malays. Groote Eylandt particularly was a region where the native culture had more intensive contact with Malay traders. Possibly dugout manufacture was learned there and the English Company Island people relearned it from their southern neighbors.[10]

The conservatism of Australian material culture is more or less demonstrated by the persistence of the bark canoe. Even today men who know how to make a dugout with outrigger equipment paddle their bark canoes across the open sea from island to island and from the various points of land. The fashioning of a dugout canoe takes much longer and requires more skill than any other article in the North Australian technology; further, after it has been made, it becomes a more or less permanent part of a man's equipment. The bark canoe is easily constructed; it can be made for immediate use with very little labor, and the material for its construction is always at hand. Its value in labor is consequently little, and it can be discarded with no feeling of loss. A bark canoe is seldom used after

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[10] Tindale, *op. cit.*

177 501 one voyage, for it quickly becomes unfit for use, because of the cracking and warping of the bark. Since it does not become a permanent part of a man's possessions it is not an added responsibility and care, as is the case with the dugout canoe. The material for the dugout canoe is difficult to get, the trees used are frequently a considerable distance from the inland rivers or the sea, and it involves the labor of a number of men to transport the canoe from its place of manufacture to the water. The rarity of the material adds to the value of the canoe. The labor involved and the organization of the labor contribute their share to increasing the canoe's value to the native owner; consequently an aborigine who possesses a dugout canoe feels a considerable responsibility for its safety and upkeep, and the canoe gives him a relationship with his immediate environment which is permanent and will not allow him to make his decisions with the ease that he would if he did not feel the necessity of taking care of his property.

177 501 439 To sum up, the bark canoe fits into the general pattern of Murngin behavior. The Murngin is not particularly interested in his material culture and would rather not be disturbed by its burdens and responsibilities. The manufacture and possession of a dugout canoe obviously do not fit into the general scheme of things as does the bark canoe. It is highly probable that the tardy and partial acceptance of the dugout in Murngin culture is due to the above set of causes. When the Malays supplied the canoes ready-made and they could be acquired each season for turtle shell that was saved during the dry season, or for pearls that the native found while eating his oysters, the burden of making the canoe and the great responsibility of ownership were not felt. The turtle shell and pearls were worthless to the native, so that if a man lost his canoe he could replace it without any effort and without loss of any property that he valued. As a result, while the Malays supplied them ready-made the natives used them, but when the Malay supply was gone the bark canoe once more returned to partial use.

177 501 The dugout finally became a trait in Murngin material culture because a man has a better chance of harpooning a turtle, dugong, or shark in the comparatively firm footing supplied by a dugout than he has from the unsubstantial bark canoe. Several informants who were excellent sea hunters declared that this was the reason they used the dugout instead of the older bark canoe.

The canoe mast and the pandanus sail are but two parts of one general invention, since the former is a mechanical device used to articulate the latter to a dugout canoe. The technical equipment to make a mast was already in the hands of the native, since he is an expert carver. The ability he shows in the manufacture of his carved totemic emblems demonstrates this fact. The mast is a very simple object to make; what is more important, it takes but a few minutes and can be discarded when it has been used only once, with no sense of real loss to the owner. It does not 177 burden the native with "excess baggage." It is easier to make a new one 501 than to keep an old one.

The use of the pandanus sail has become general in the north. It is easily constructed and only a few hours are needed for its manufacture. It is a labor-saving device, and any such invention is deeply appreciated by the leisure-loving blacks. It, too, fits into the general scheme; no new technique was needed for its manufacture. The simple twining method [285] used in the construction of the native basket or mat, with only slight modification, made an excellent pandanus leaf sail, the only difference being in the size of the strands used.

The most difficult element in the learning process that would enable a man to sail a boat rather than paddle it was the actual sailing itself. As has been said, the manufacture of a mast and sail is simple; but to learn to sail a canoe with a large pandanus sail, to adjust it to the vagaries of winds and tides, and, in all, to learn the job of a sailor man, undoubtedly took a long time. From what the writer has seen of the native's lack of interest in any activity that was not pleasurable, it seems obvious to him that if the native had not had a keen interest in the sea and a strong wanderlust, both of which the dugout canoe and its mast and sail definitely satisfied, Murngin civilization would never have adopted this whole complex.

The Malay pipe is a small, straight stick with its center bored out; at 177 about four inches from the distal end a hole is made in the side of the pipe 276 which connects with the central chamber; this latter hole is lined with a small piece of tin and forms the bowl of the pipe. Bamboo or cane is generally used, or a small tree whose central core has been eaten out by termites. The Malays introduced both the use and the manufacture of the tobacco pipe during the period in which they traded with the aborigines. Although the aborigines know that they acquired the pipe from the Malays, they believe they practiced smoking before this time, and point to the fact that there are several native tobaccos.[11] Whether this is true or not it is impossible to say at the present time, but nearly all the evidence seems to point to the introduction of smoking into Australia from a Malay source. However, if the latter is true, the natives quickly learned how to use native substitutes after they could no longer obtain Malay tobacco.

The substitution of the iron tomahawk (brought in as an article of 177 trade by the Malays) for the stone axe can be understood, since the iron 412 implement is a far more capable instrument, and—a more important reason—the tomahawk was easily acquired and it was not necessary to learn

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[11] The Murngin insist that they had a native tobacco before the Macassar introduced the variety they use at the present time. The leaves were macerated and wrapped in paper bark and smoked as a cigarette, or put in a cane which had a hole in one end much like the Queensland type of pipe.

177 412 how to make it. There was no arduous labor attached to collecting turtle shell to trade for an axe, for the shell came as a by-product to the pursuit of harpooning turtles. The making of the stone axe took time and a considerable amount of hard labor; but to go turtle hunting was a pleasure, since turtle harpooning expeditions are not only for the anticipated enjoyment of the flesh and to supply the family larder, but also for the pure joy of stalking the turtle, spearing it, and bringing it home to an admiring audience which could appreciate one's abilities as a hunter and a man of importance. Undoubtedly pride of workmanship is felt by a native axe-[461] maker. His fellow tribesmen always express their appreciation of a well-turned-out axe or spear head, but the social approbation given to the two occupations is completely disproportionate.

177 439 The turtle shell had never been used, and had been discarded until the Malay came; that it should become an article of high value to the trader was an item of some amusement and a fortuitous circumstance for the aborigines. Since the women gather oysters, the trading of pearls for the Malay objects of trade was looked upon by the black as an even greater bit of luck than the trading of shell.

177 225 439 The trepang (*beche-de-mer*) industry demanded more effort. In this activity the Malay showed himself a practical sociologist, for he again made no vain attempt to change Murngin civilization to his liking, but merely used the institutions he found among them to satisfy his wants.

Canoes were given to certain men who, with their clansmen, gathered the sea slugs from the low-lying sand banks at low tide. All this the native understood, since it was but one added particular to a general type of behavior; and although the blacks do not eat trepang, this animal belongs to a group of seashore fauna which are gathered and eaten, and could have been added to the diet without any change in the methods of acquiring food. But there is one element in the economic structure of Murngin civilization that must have made this adaptation somewhat difficult, since the sexual division of labor allots the task of gathering mollusk and other seashore foods to the women. Men only gather these articles of diet for their own use when they have no women with them and there is nothing else to eat. It is very likely that if the natives could not have speared fish or harpooned dugong or turtle while looking for trepang beds, the Malays would have found the industry unprofitable, if not impossible.

175 137 The Malay brought the tamarind fruit with him. The seeds that were thrown away sprouted, and now the lands where he voyaged are known by their growth of the tamarind tree. Many of these trees are very large. The circles of trees which surround the spot where once a huge tamarind tree had grown show that they are secondary growths and do not represent the earliest period of the Malay contact. No one knows how long the Malay 174 has been making his voyages to Australia. The writer attempted to find

174 an approximate date of his first intrusion into the Arafura Sea by means of the tamarind tree. A few of the larger trees were cut down and cross-sections taken to show the number of growth rings on the tree. It was thought that by determining the amount of time shown by the tree rings and adding approximately two-thirds of the time it took the parent tree to grow, it might be possible to say at least that the Malay had been coming for the period represented by their growth, even though we could not say he had been in North Australia before this. Unfortunately, according to competent botanists, it is impossible to date a tamarind by its tree rings.

174 172 The writer excavated two large shell mounds on Millingimbi Island, in the Crocodile group, both of which had tamarind trees near, or growing on them. One of these kitchen middens surrounded a water hole that was known generally to all the aborigines as Macassar Well. Although I was able to accumulate a large collection of native artifacts in the eight feet of shell excavated, I did not find any that were Malay. This, however, does not demonstrate a late Malay invasion because negative evidence does not prove the Malay was not there. Furthermore, the bases of the trunks of the tamarind trees on the mound were well covered with refuse shell. One tree was, by measurement, well over a foot under the accumulated shell. Since the accumulated refuse was well packed and hardened by time, this seems to point to a considerable period of Malay contact with North Australia. The number of people using this mound was never large, and it would take such a group a considerable period of time, to throw away a sufficient number of mollusk shells to form a foot of debris around the base of a tamarind tree.

177 262 The ripe tamarind pods are eaten and greatly appreciated by the natives. They are looked upon as a part of the general economic flora, although it is known that they were derived from the Malay. No native would ever think of planting a tamarind tree for later use.

177 From this brief summary of the Malay influence on the material culture of the Murngin, it is obvious that the number of Malay contributions was small, and especially when considered from the larger aspect of the total aboriginal culture, of no great numerical importance. Looked at from the point of view of Malay civilization, it can be seen that the greater part of Malay technology was not adopted. All the objects taken over by Murngin culture were but modifications of original indigenous inventions, with the possible exception of the Malay pipe. The exotic dugout canoe, with its mast and sail, partially took the place of the bark canoe, but did not entirely supplant it. The tamarind tree, although a part of the culture because it contributes, however slightly, to the Murngin larder, is not a true cultural element, since Murngin civilization is in no way responsible for its existence. It is an integral part of Malay culture, since it is planted and is

177 part of their agricultural complex. It is probable that tides, currents, birds, and other natural causes introduced several floral species into the north that are part of the raw material used in the technological and economic life of the Murngin. Since the tamarind fruit is known to be edible, these plants, brought in by natural means, occupy the same position in Murngin life as the tamarind.

With the exception of the canoe, sail, mast, tobacco pipe, Malay beard, and tamarind tree, little else was contributed by these traders as a permanent part of Murngin material culture. Their influence on the interior people was far less than that felt by the coastal groups. The dugout, with its sail and mast, has not, even today, penetrated twenty miles inland, except by visits of the coastal people, even though there are large navigable rivers and inland lakes that would support a dugout canoe. The Malay pipe is generally used on the coast and the interior. Very few iron tomahawks ever reached the bush people. The tamarind tree is found only on the coast and the adjacent islands, for the Malay never penetrated the interior parts of Arnhem Land.

Malay Influence on the Social Life of the Murngin.—Although the contributions of Malay civilization to Murngin material culture were not large, the purely social elements added to the aboriginal civilization were still less, and probably of less importance in modifying the other social traits. The chief elements of immaterial culture that were adopted by the eastern Arafuran natives were: (1) a pidgin Malay language that was spoken by a considerable number of natives in all the coastal tribes, but not by all the male members of the society; (2) Malay personal and place names; (3) part of the mast-raising ceremony of the Malay voyagers; (4) a mourning ceremony; and (5) other fragmentary elements, such as folk tales.

177 A pidgin Malay dialect was spoken by most of the older men among
198 the tribes along the Arafura coast. This language became a lingua franca
among the various linguistic groups who border the coast. A man traveling
from Cape Don, in the far west, could make himself understood to the
people on Groote Eylandt. The language stimulated intertribal communi-
177 cation. The introduction of the dugout canoe, with its sail, also accelerated
and intensified the interrelations of the various local groups and dialectic
501 tribes. Anyone who has traveled a few hundred miles in a dugout, with
484 and without sails, quickly comes to the conclusion that a canoe with a sail
can average more than double the distance of a canoe depending on
paddles for locomotion. The sailing canoe also made it possible for two
friendly groups separated by hostile clans to communicate when the
intervening peoples were on the warpath. Before this time, with the old
bark canoe, it was often necessary to land on unfriendly territory because
of the voyager's inability to cover the distance in one day's paddling. Al-

177

501 484

though the dugout was capable of carrying more people than its predecessor, it did not develop into a war canoe.

177 103

The Malays gave all the islands, beaches, bodies of water, peninsulas, and other landmarks names from their own vocabulary, which the natives learned and used in addition to their own. All the locations in the whole territory which were touched by the Malay sailors have Malay as well as native terms. Men who do not know the Malay dialect usually know the Malay place names of a particular district.

177 551

Almost all the people of the Arafura country also have Malay personal names. These names were originally given them by the Malays, but they were passed by the natives to their own relatives through the custom of giving a sister's daughter's son, or a son's son, the name of a mother's mother's brother, or a father's father; and in the female line by giving the daughter's daughter or brother's son's daughter the name of a mother's mother or father's father's sister. The Murngin know which are Malay personal and place names and which are aboriginal in origin.

177 192 601

There were no Malay words adopted by the blacks to describe the various social institutions of the Murngin. No clan or local group, as far as the writer could determine, received a Malay name which was used by the black. No kinship term was adopted from the Malay terms, although it might be argued that the word for father (bapa) in Murngin nomenclature, being the same as the Malay word, was taken from the intruders. When it is realized that this same word bapa figures in the more central tribes as a kinship term, and that in some of these kinship systems it means older brother and in other places describes still different relatives, it will be seen that this likeness in the two languages was probably a coincidence. It could just as easily be argued that our word "papa" was taken over by the blacks and used for their word for father, since white civilization had been in contact with aboriginal Australian culture in the south and east for a considerable period of time. A visiting Malay, had he come to the Arafura country later than the white man, might have argued this were he as uncritical as many white theorists in their arguments for the diffusion of culture traits.

177 773

The Malays only slightly influenced Murngin mythology. Certain myths seem to have a possible Malay origin, or, if not Malay, then some other outside source, since they do not seem to fit into the general cultural background. For instance, the belief that a man acquires the soul of the man he has killed may be due to the transportation of the head-hunting idea from Indonesia to Australia by the Malay traders. On the other hand, it is also likely that this Indonesian idea came by way of New Guinea and then down to Australia at a much earlier period than this last, Malay contact.

Certain native myths have been somewhat modified to make a place

177 773 for the Malay in the native cosmic ideology, just as the myths have been added to in order to account for the white man and his civilization; but all these changes are purely superficial and but additional facts seeded into native cosmologies.

177 764 At the end of their visits in Australia the Malays always lifted their masts, which had been taken down, and fastened them securely to the decks as part of their final preparation for departure. It is possible that there was a slight ceremony involved in this. The Murngin have taken the activities that surrounded the raising of the mast and transplanted them as a ritual into part of their burial ceremony. This has not been done by all of the clans, but is confined to only a few of the groups of the Yiritja moiety. The lifting of the mast by the Malays meant to the Murngin that they were leaving for that year, and, in a way, it symbolized their farewell to Australia in the minds of the Murngin. The idea of the departure of the Malay ship has been transferred to the idea of the departure of the soul of the dead.

The corpse is lifted in the same way as Malays were supposed to have raised their mast, and the natives chant a pidgin variety of Malay which seems to be a version of Malay chanting. When the body is raised from the ground to be taken to the grave, two men say a Malay prayer over it.—The prayer is supposed to mean, according to my native informants, that they are asking for a safe journey for the soul, that no trouble will come to it, just as the Malay, in his prayer, asked for a safe voyage for his ship. This prayer was said by the Malays, according to native ideas, during a storm and before they left for their homelands.—The natives then dance a ceremonial pulling-up of the anchor while taking the body to the grave. A mast is raised over the grave as a memorial.

All this is of particular interest to the student of symbolism and ritual, since it clearly demonstrates some of the methods by which abstract ideas are put into concrete form and the various elements of culture integrated into a single unity in the minds of the people and in their group actions.

177 776 Some of the coastal clans have added articles of Malay material culture to their list of multiple totems. Each clan has a large number of totems which are ranked according to their emotional mythological importance. The Malay totems usually belong to the garma class, which is the lowest and can be seen by women. This is not so much the direct influence of Malay culture as the inclusion of new facts into Murngin classifications. The whole of their world (animal, plant, mineral, cultural, et cetera), has been symbolized into a totemic system. It would be strange indeed if the culture did not find a place for the Malay and the contents of his culture. At present there is a tendency to substitute the white man and his civilization for the Malay in the totemic system.

144 *Malay Influence on the Racial Stock.*—It is surprising to the investigator

648 whites of the north have for the black men of this district. The killing of several whites and Japanese has put a heavy fear in the hearts of all intruders into these parts. The natives have a reputation for treachery, largely because of their ambushing of several white pearlers and night attacks on a few Japanese boats, where all the men were killed, in retaliation for mistreatment of their women.

144 These last few remarks have been added further to substantiate the possible causes which prevented race mixture when the Malays were coming into North Australia. Since the rapacious civilization of the West cannot produce half-castes in this region, it is less probable that the more gentle Malay culture would produce racial hybrids in North Australia. Tindale, in his article on the Groote Eylandt natives, says that the Malays were interested in acquiring native women to take home with them. I can find no evidence of this among the Murngin and their neighboring tribes. A number of native men, however, did go to Macassar and the other islands whence the Malays had come. The writer met one or two of these men who had served as pearlers on seasonal voyages on Malay boats.

●177 The influence of the Malay race and culture has not been important in northeastern Arnhem Land. There are but slight traces of hybridization in race or culture. The greatest influence is found in the material culture, and the least in the social institutions of Murngin civilization. Compared with the total number of traits found in aboriginal culture, those added from the more eastern civilization are very few indeed and, with the exception of the dugout complex, have had no significant influence on the development of Murngin civilization. On the other hand, when an examination is made of the even larger number of traits found in Malay culture, and they are contrasted with the very few adopted by the Murngin from the Malays, it becomes even further demonstrable that Murngin civilization remained very near to what it was before the Malay arrived, and that the Malay gave little of his own civilization to aboriginal Australia.

History of Burial Customs

171 764 174 The Murngin now finally dispose of their dead by placing the bones in a symbolically carved hollow log and planting the log upright within the camp. This is true of all the tribes except those in Cape Wessel Island, where the natives, after wrapping the bones of the dead in paper bark, put them in rock shelters. I am told by island natives that the rock shelter is used also in the interior back of Blue Mud Bay. All the natives to the west, such as the Gunwingu and Maung, use the hollow-log method of disposal. Historically this situation raises an interesting problem of priority of burial customs. The distribution of the rock burial method in the far

Archaeology and the Ground Stone Axe

412 174 [324] [177] The ground stone axe is normally considered to be comparatively recent in Australia because it is not distributed throughout the whole of the continent; it is not found in the southwestern part of Australia. Such evidence is not conclusive since the spear-thrower, which is looked upon as an old trait by many authorities, is not found in certain sections of southeastern Australia. It is largely because European stratification shows it to be more recent than the chipping or flaking techniques found in the Old Stone Age cultures in the sites of such countries as France and Spain that this assumption has been made for Australia. The stone axe is the only ground stone implement found in Australia, for the knives, spear heads and similar tools and weapons are made by the chipping and flaking techniques. The Murngin possess this implement; the writer made a fairly large collection of them. The stone axe is little used by the people on the coast because they have acquired Malay iron axes and more recently European ones, but nevertheless they are still in use in the interior and occasionally along the coast.

172 Because the axe is stone and durable it gives one a good opportunity to use archaeological methods to study its approximate age in Murngin culture and possibly Australian civilization, since there were a number of large shell mounds distributed generally along the Murngin coast and in particular in the island of Millingimbi in the Crocodile group where the present Christian mission is now located. Two of these Millingimbi mounds were excavated by the writer with the help of aboriginal labor and mission picks and shovels.

The largest mound was located about one hundred yards or so from the shore and was shaped like the crater of a volcano with a rock water hole in its depths. This crater-like appearance was so real that the missionaries had called it Meteor Well because an explorer a year or two before my arrival had pronounced it the result of a meteor's fall. Actually, it was the result of human habitation spread around a clan well and the dropping of oyster and other shells around this water hole. This mound was about 425 feet long. The crater was approximately eighty-five to ninety feet across. The mound itself was eight feet wide and eight and one-half feet deep from its highest part to the earth's surface. It tapered off gradually to each side. The Murngin women were still adding shells to the heap by bringing to the water hole for opening baskets full of bivalves dug out of the mud flats along the coast or pried from the rocks of the oyster beds. The seacoast had a bountiful supply of shell food on this side of the island. A trench was sunk in the mound running from the outside to the center of the crater. It measured five feet in width and was excavated through the shell into a foot or more of earth, which gave a fair sampling of the site.

may be possible that Malay influence brought the final elaboration which 342 formed the gabled superstructure. The pile house is never used in the 174 water and is found only on raised ground. The native explanation of why the more eastern parts of the Murngin country do not possess the mosquito house is that there are not so many mosquitoes here and the ordinary hut with the fire in front works better than the mosquito house. It is probably true, since the morasses of the Goyder and Glyde Rivers breed more mosquitoes than any other part of the country.

Another type of shelter found in the north is the stone cave dwelling. 342 Dwellings of this type are used during the wet season in the lonely hill country in the interior, on Wessel Island, and sporadically around Buckingham Bay.

2. Articles That Are Worn

Although the nights of the dry season are at times quite cold, no 291 clothing has been invented or borrowed by these people, as were kangaroo skin cloaks farther south.

It has been said that need does not produce invention, and the Australian black has been pictured as an example of this theory. Such criticism is colored by the prejudices of our own social standards. The days in Arnhem Land are always warm. No clothes are needed for comfort. The occasional cold nights are made comfortable by windbreaks and small fires built to [374] produce ample warmth. In other words, instead of using one of our methods, the Australian has utilized a different invention to combat the cold. During the rainy season clothes are a hindrance rather than a help.

It has been asserted further that the black lacked the intelligence to invent clothes, since as soon as he came in contact with white civilization he 291 177 donned the habiliments of Caucasian culture. He has, around white settlements where native civilization has disappeared, adopted the clothing of western civilization, but this is not so much an adoption by his own culture of an element of white civilization to meet his needs, as a more or less complete abandonment of his own material culture and his adoption of the white men as his master and the white men's culture as his own. The wearing of clothing has done more harm, destroyed more natives, made the aborigine far less adapted to his natural surroundings in the north, than has almost any other element of white culture. His naked condition before the coming of the white man was far more appropriate to the country he lived in.

String.—String is basic to most of the articles worn by the Murngin. All 283 string, composed of only two strands, is made of vegetable or animal fiber: the inner bark of certain trees (the hibiscus, in particular), the inner bark of their roots, and opossum fur or human hair. The string of vegetable matter is usually fine and carefully twisted, while the other is loosely woven

396 The natives then go over the boat with their iron hatchets, chop away any of the burned material and smooth the surface. The sides of the canoe are chipped on the inside as well as the outside. They are approximately an inch to an inch and a half thick along the gunwales and to about half way down, where they gradually increase in thickness. The bottom of the boat is from three to three and a half inches thick. The bow and stern also increase in thickness. It is impossible to tell one end from the other until a hole has been made in the stern for the anchor rope. The outside of the bottom of the boat is rounded and has no keel. There is no carving of any kind on any of the Murngin canoes.

The mast, from six to eight feet in height, is a sapling that has been barked. A notch is made at its top for tying the ropes of the sail.

501 177 Although some of the older men know what an outrigger is, as was demonstrated to the writer by drawings on the sand, no canoe in the area is ever fitted with one. The natives all insisted they never used them. It is impossible to state definitely the reasons for the natives of northeastern Arnhem Land not taking over the outrigger; the only reason given by them was that the canoe did not need it, and it was just as good without one. It is possible that their resistance to cultural traits generally, and particularly to any trait that causes extra labor, explains their lack of appreciation of the outrigger. Until the introduction of the dugout they had been using a bark canoe which did not possess the outrigger, and it is likely that their old pattern of behavior had such a strong hold upon them that the outrigger was not adopted.

501 In the interior part of the Murngin country the people do not possess boats of any description but use a specially constructed bark bundle, large enough to support one or two individuals, as a raft to cross streams. This type of raft is also used when the men wish to fish in the middle of a stream.

Paddles.—Paddles are made from light wood, usually stringy bark. The blade is roughly oblong in shape; and although the handle and blade are of one piece, the division between the two is indicated either by a sharp flare of the blade from the handle, or, rarely, by the top of the blade forming a right angle with the handle.

Paddles usually are five to five and one-half feet long, with the blade about two feet and the handle three. The blade width has about a four-inch norm. The handle is carved in the form of a cylinder. Sometimes the end of the handle has a square knob for a hand hold. The top and bottom of the blade are convex; the edges of the blades are very thin.

One type of blade tapers at the distal end, whereas the other has a squared end. [531] Although the paints dissolve immediately in water, the natives often paint their paddles for the mere pleasure of decorating them and seeing their beauty.

501 Paddles and clubs have many traits in common and are obviously under the same technical influences.

Anchors.—An anchor consists of a large stone tied to a twelve to eighteen foot turtle rope, attached to the stern of a canoe. The canoe, with the aid of the stone anchor, can then be left near the water so that at low tide it is beached and at high tide it is floating but held from being carried to sea. This comparatively simple invention seems rudimentary and without significance, but a more careful analysis of its function shows it to be quite important. In the first place, instead of a man being forced to watch the tide and to hold the canoe during high tide, or beach it after considerable labor, this simple invention is substituted for him; or, to state it in another way, it takes the place of a man's hands, and is, therefore, one more projection of man's body into his culture through his tools. If the canoe is beached beyond high tide, the labor of several men is required both for taking it out of the water and putting it back again. The anchor acts as a labor-saving device.

5. Tools Used for Gathering Sea Food

411 *Turtle Harpoon.*—The turtle harpoon is a modification of the ordinary spear. Its shaft is about fifteen feet long and its diameter is much more than that of the usual spear shaft. The handle section has the usual smooth socket for the articulation of the spear-thrower, but the distal section is constructed entirely differently from that of the ordinary wooden or stone-headed spear. A socket several inches deep is bored into the far end of the shaft; this is used to keep in place the iron prong attached to the turtle rope. When the harpoon has been driven into the back of the turtle, dugong, or other sea animal, the prong comes loose from the shaft.

Harpoon Rope.—The rope for deep-sea harpooning and for anchoring 411
a dugout canoe is made of the inner bark of the hibiscus. Unlike the two-
ply string, it is composed of three strands. Each strand has a large number 283
of fibers in it and the rope is about five-eighths of an inch in diameter.
The harpoon rope is ordinarily about sixty to seventy feet long. It can be
spliced by turning back the ends of the two pieces which are to be con-
nected and interlocking the two loops. The strands of each end are then
woven into the rope and wrapped with cord. A minimum of four people
is necessary to manufacture a harpoon rope. It is never made by women.
Whether three-ply rope is a Malay intrusion, a diffused technique from
Papua or Melanesia, or invented by the Australian natives, cannot be [177] ●
proved. The fact that it is closely associated with the dugout canoe seems
to suggest the Malay hypothesis, since the dugout in the western Arafura
Sea is a Malay contribution to this civilization, and since the dugout car-
ried with it the sail and the mast and the anchor rope as part of its
complex.

286 *Fish Nets.*—Fish nets are made not by the loop method but with the ordi-

252 This type of earth oven is made only for cooking larger animals. Fish, except minnows, are cooked on the open fire; minnows are carefully wrapped in paper bark and placed in the ash of a camp fire for cooking. A camp fire ordinarily used for cooking purposes is always made on a layer of earth taken from the nest of an ant bed. This earth is a kind of clay and holds its warmth longer.

Sometimes ground-fires for cooking are made by heaping a pile of stones in a hollowed-out spot and building a fire on them. After the stones are hot, paper bark and leaves are placed on them, the chunks of meat put in with bark and leaves over them, and the whole covered with sand and allowed to steam.

373 Pandanus palms are lighted to make a beacon for parties of canoes traveling at night in friendly country. They are also fired for certain totemic ceremonies.

322 To straighten a spear shaft, it is heated until the outside is smoked, then the maker holds the part of the shaft that is to be straightened between his two hands, places it against his knee, foot, or in his mouth, and pulls upon it. This process is repeated until, sighting along the shaft, it is seen to be straight.

304 Scarifications are made by pressing burning brands against the skin until the inner skin is burned through and a large welt formed. Ash is put inside the burn.[4]

412 *Stone Axe.*—All axes are of the ground-stone variety in this district, as they are everywhere throughout Australia except in the southwest.

They are made usually from smooth river stones. They normally weigh two and a quarter to three pounds, and vary from three to five inches in length, from two and one-half to four and one-half inches in width, and about one-half to one and a half inches in thickness at the larger end. The [324] axes are convex on both sides. The hafted end is usually slightly flaked to make a rough surface.

The stone blade is hafted to a wooden handle in the following manner: a small pliable stick is flattened on one side and bent in the middle so that the two ends meet. The axe head at the hafting end has been covered with beeswax. The stick is bent over the head and wrapped tightly with fiber string near the stone blade to hold it in place. Sometimes a pandanus circlet is plaited about the hafting instead of cord being used.

[324] The stone is ground to a sharp edge. The surface sometimes is ground only along the edge, but usually grinding extends to the border of the portion covered by the beeswax.

The handle is from ten to sixteen inches in length, but the norm is thirteen inches.

177 The Malays brought the steel axe for trading purposes and the white man has continued this process, so that the stone axe is seldom made today.

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[4] Scarification is also produced by cutting.

The technique has not been lost, for several old men know how they are made. 177

Food Grinding Stone.—These small stones are used to grind up seeds or nuts gathered by the women and to break mussel shells. They are three or four inches in length, the same in width, and about two inches in thickness. A rock of the proper shape is used and no artificial shaping is done. However, there is a socializing agency at work, in the sense that a round rock flattened on the two opposite sides is preferred and, further, the grinding gradually works the center into a cavity; such a stone has now assumed value and is sought for by a woman in preference to a new stone. The depression is sometimes an inch and a half deep. The stone weighs about a pound and a half normally, but varies from one-half to two and a quarter pounds. [253] 412

A larger-sized grinding stone also used by the native women is five inches by three inches and weighs about four pounds. It is also flattened on two sides.

The upper grinding stone, or grinder, is usually egg-shaped and is nothing more than an untreated smooth water stone. It has a diameter of about one and one-half inches and weighs from one-eighth to a quarter of a pound.

Camp Wells.—Two types of wells are dug during the dry season. The first is made more or less unconsciously by each person's excavating a small amount of earth from the bottom of a shallow water hole and continuing this process as the water dries up in the latter part of the season. The second variety is purposefully dug where water is known to be. It may be one or two feet in diameter or large enough to allow a man to get down in it to fill his paper-bark basin. Wells of this type sometimes reach a depth of four or five feet. Associated with an artificially constructed well is usually found the long-handled paper-bark container, made by attaching a long stick to an ordinary container with fiber string. 312

Bridges.—The Murngin often construct rude bridges by placing one to three tree trunks over the smaller streams about the camp. 491

7. Articles Used in Ceremonies

Feather Headdresses.—The chief materials used in making feather headdresses are resin, beeswax, fiber string, feathers of various birds, leg bones of birds, and wooden or sting-ray prongs. The feathers are hafted to the wooden, bone, or sting-ray pins with ironwood resin. White and black cockatoo tail feathers, the crest of the sulphur-crested cockatoo, emu, jabiru, egret, heron, native companion, goose, and duck feathers are the chief ones used, but feathers of other birds are also utilized. 292 287

The pin of the Gunabibi type of headdress is four to six inches long, and usually incised and ruddled if of wood. Sometimes the pin is made from the leg bone of a bird. The resin or beeswax hafting is in the shape [537] them after they have gone through their initiations into the higher age grades. The sacred names of the women are never known by them and are used only by the men. Each person has anywhere from four to ten names. With the coming of the Malays the natives had a new source from which to obtain their personal names: some aspect of the material culture of the Malays as it is expressed in Australian waters, or occasionally a personal name taken from the Malays met. All the Murngin are anxious to acquire as many names as possible; and when they come in contact with white civilization they are always pleased to obtain a personal name from the whites, whether it be one of our personal names, a nickname, possibly a place name, or sometimes a combination of these elements, as for example, Cape Don Tommy (Cape Don being the name of a prominent landmark in the Arafura Sea). 551 [177]

APPENDIX VI

MURNGIN SIGN LANGUAGE

All the tribes in northeastern Arnhem Land have a very elaborate sign language which is used between peoples who do not understand each other's spoken languages, between the deaf and dumb, and by young men who are observing taboos of silence after certain initiations. The complete sign language of the Murngin was not worked out by the author, but sufficient samples of it were taken to indicate its general outlines and the methods of developing its symbolism. Listed below are several score of words and their sign-language equivalents. 201

Bapa—touching the right shoulder with the left hand.
Arndi—touching the breast.
Marikmo and maraitcha—touching the top of the head.
Gatu—touching the right shoulder.
Wawa and yukiyuko—touching the calf of the leg.
Yeppa—touching the calf of the leg.
Gawel—touching the inside of the right elbow.
Male and female galle—touching the left and right buttocks.
Mokul rumeru—touching the knee.
Male and female mari and kutara—touching the backbone.
Marelker, gurrong, dumungur, momelker, and natchiwalker—touching the knee.
Kaminyer, nati, and momo—touching the chin.
Mokul bapa—touching the right shoulder.

THE STORY OF THE EXPEDITION

After being entertained at vice-regal, civic and academic receptions in the capital cities, in a manner seldom accorded a scientific party, members assembled in Adelaide during the second week in March. On the morning of 18 March, all left for Darwin, over two thousand miles away, in a Royal Australian Air Force plane and well before sunset we reached our destination. The delivery of heavy equipment, which had been sent overland, delayed the party for ten days in Darwin. The naturalists, however, were fully employed, for the sea coast and jungles adjacent to the camp were particularly rich in fauna and flora. 122 121

It was planned to establish four research camps and to stay in the field from March until November, leaving before the oncoming wet season would hamper, if not prevent, our movements. Each camp would be situated in different topographical conditions, conditions which not only determined the distribution of the fauna and flora, but also influenced the aboriginal way of life.[4] 121

The camps were to be:

(a) Groote Eylandt. This was an island camp, with a somewhat stony hinterland and a distinctive aboriginal culture.

(b) Roper River. A fresh-water river and swamp environment and an aboriginal way of life which depends largely on river and fishing techniques.

(c) Yirrkalla. Situated on the sea coast in north-eastern Arnhem Land, with fresh-water swamps and eucalyptus forests in the rear. The culture of the aborigines has been somewhat influenced by Macassan fishermen who, until about forty years ago, regularly visited those parts. [177]

(d) Oenpelli. On the western escarpment of the Arnhem Land plateau. This camp has a particularly wide range of topographical conditions, each with its own distinctive fauna and flora. To the east is the rugged Arnhem Land plateau, in which there are many aboriginal cave shelters. At the base are lines of fresh-water lagoons, the home of a multitude of water-birds and fish and, to the west, the widespreading flood-plains of the Alligator Rivers.

By 1 April the heavy camp equipment and supplies had reached Darwin and the party was ready to move to our first camp at Groote Eylandt. However, although the Royal Australian Air Force was able to fly us to Groote Eylandt in Catalina flying-boats, it did not have planes capable of transporting our forty-seven tons of food, camp gear and scientific equipment. Providentially (at least, so it seemed at the time) the owner-skipper of a 200-ton, flat-bottomed wooden barge called the *Phoenix*, which had been commissioned to bring dismantled material to Darwin from an old flying-boat base at Groote Eylandt, offered to carry the supplies on the outward journey, promising to reach there within fourteen days of our departure.

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[4] Map, Fig. 1.

*773 Four bark paintings and an engraved smoking pipe[81] deal with the myth of *Oijal* and *Neri-neri.*

*532 Plate 92A is the ancestor *Oijal.* He is carrying his stone-headed spear and spear-thrower in one hand, three boomerangs, *kunlili,* in the other, a spirit bag[82] round his neck and an opossum string pubic apron. The transverse bars across his chest and abdomen are body scars and the band round his neck, as well as the V-shaped line of dots on his chest, are painted body decorations.

In the bark painting, Pl. 92D, the story of *Oijal* and his sister in their caves at Melville Bay is illustrated in considerable detail. *Oijal,* the central figure, carries a boomerang in his left hand and two boomerangs, a stone-headed spear and a spear-thrower in his right. Groups of three boomerangs are shown to the left of his head and the right of his thigh. Another stone-headed spear is immediately to the left. The caves in which *Oijal* and his sister now live are indicated by two crescents, *b, b,* on the upper edge. The two designs, *a, a,* on the right and left-hand edge of the painting are totemic rocks near the caves. Hanging from the right-hand crescent, *b,* from the right arm of *Oijal* and in the extreme upper right at *d* are three of the baskets which *Oijal* and *Neri-neri* filled with honey. The four dotted semi-circular designs below, *a, a,* are the bark dishes in which the ancestors cooked their honey at Melville Bay. Wandarani River, near Melville Bay, made when the ancestors felled the tree, is represented by the zigzag cross-hatched lines at *e* on the lower edge. A similar design, *f,* upper left, is a tributary of Wandarani River. Cabbage palms, *c, c, c, c,* grow near the caves of *Oijal.*

In Pl. 92B the panels *a, e* and *f* are the boomerangs belonging to *Oijal* and *b, b,* the foliage of some unidentified edible tuber, the tubers being shown on panels *c, d* and g. The dots on either side of the tubers are small stones on the ground. The central parallel vertical lines represent a track showing many wallaby footprints.

The upper part of this bark painting, Pl. 92C, deals with the man, *Oijal,* at Trial Bay and his day's catch of three snakes and eleven goannas. There is also a number of snake eggs in a basket made from the leaves of the cabbage palm (rectangle, lower right). *Oijal,* with his two hunting dogs, is on the upper left. The central cross-hatched transverse band is a stream at Trial Bay. On the bottom panel are the food-gathering efforts of his sister, *Neri-neri.* She is pictured on the right, digging stick in hand, a large carrying-basket over her shoulder and a small one round her neck. During the day she collected a number of edible yams.

● 177

An Aboriginal's Visit to the Land of the Malays

*773 This painting describes a visit of a *jiritja* man, *Amalatja,* to the land of the

*532 Malay trepangers, who, during last century, periodically visited the coast of

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[81] This is described elsewhere (Fig. 62B, p. 390).

[82] The spirit bag worn by the medicine man gives him greater power in healing or magic, because of the totemic spirits which live in it. See Warner (1937), p. 179; also p. 40.

[778]

773* 532* 648 177

Arnhem Land. The painting was made by *Amalatja*'s son, *Mungarani*, to whom his father had related his experiences. When the old man, *Amalatja*, was wandering round a village called Jumaina[83] on one occasion he saw women making calico (cloth) by putting two bamboos in the ground and stringing cotton thread between them, obviously a native loom. They shook the bamboos, and made a hammering noise (possibly either the sound of the shuttle or the beating of the thread in place), and 'calico' came off. These same women, called *Jubana*,[84] also collected the rice from the fields.

One day he saw a bandit, or a robber, called *Warumu*, burn down the house of one of the weavers, apparently a raid. *Mungarani* said that his father, who was puzzled about this outrage, thought that perhaps *Warumu* did not like the sound of the women making calico.

In the bottom of the painting, Pl. 93A, is *Mungarani*'s picture of the Macassan women weaving. The women are shaking the bamboo handles by which *Mungarani's* father believed they made the calico (cloth). The cloth on each loom is a different colour. In panel *c*, one of the weavers is standing on the raised floor of a house under which the fowls are resting (right-hand edge), and in the upper central panel, *b*, *Warumu* is striking a light to burn down the house. The cross-hatched upper left panel, *a*, is the smoke from the blazing house, and the band on the upper edge, a cliff behind the women's residence.

Three Mythical Men and a Bush-fire, Caledon Bay

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Three men, *Wirili*,[85] *Wuwri* and *Balang-altji*, among many others, once performed a sacred *jiritja* ceremony near the Gainmaui River, which runs into the sea between Caledon and Trial Bays. The camp fires of these men, through not being properly attended, started a bush-fire which spread over a wide area, destroying the trees, the animals and even the men who took part in the ceremony. The fire also burnt out the nest of the bandicoot, *warut-kuna*, and so frightened a hive of wild bees in a nearby swamp that they flew to Milingimbi to escape the danger. The men of the ceremony are now large white-barked eucalyptus trees, *gururi*, and the place of the bees, the Matamatani swamp, is now filled with large paper-bark trees.

Two bark paintings deal with the ceremony and the fire.

Plate 93B pictures three men, *a*, *Wirili*, *b*, *Wuwri*, and *c*, *Balang-altji*, standing in the *jiritja* ceremonial ground, near the Gainmaui River. The camps of the performers are indicated by the five dark-coloured squares at *d*. It was from one of the lower of these camps that the bush-fire originated. The series of lozenges below the ceremonial ground, to the left of the men, and completely

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[83] This is supposed to be the home of the *Baijini*, p. 333. The later generations of aborigines, knowing of Jumaina, may have attached it to the *Baijini* myth.

[84] See carved figure of *Jubana*, Pl. 137A, B.

[85] *Wirili* is also associated with the lizard, *bije*, and the deposit of yellow ochre at Caromga.

Whereas the upper panels deal with the sea and seashore, the lower two 773* deal with the land. In the central panel is the woman, *Njinpili-lingou*, a bark 532* dish on her head, standing on the top of a sand-dune near Cape Shield. The rectangles on either side of her are nearby sand-dunes. In panel *a* the five cockatoos in flight were disturbed by *Njinpili-lingou*. There are also five emus in the same panel. Their tracks are shown on panel *c*.

The Man, Wanatjai

Plate 95B is the painting of an aboriginal, *Wanatjai*, with a long Malay [177] smoking pipe in each hand.[92] On the upper edge of the painting are four steel [276] axes, and on the left-hand side two steel knives. *Wanatjai* is wearing a belt. On his chest is a design of triangles[93] which he brought back from Macassar with him.

The Woman, Malwulwi

In the early times a pregnant ancestral woman, *Malwulwi*, accompanied by a little rat, *nik-nik* (the woman's dog), went into a mangrove swamp at Gunumungu, [231] on the north side of Blue Mud Bay, to collect oysters. While filling her carrying-bag with the oysters, she was swept off her feet by a strong tide. She tried to swim to land, but was drowned because the tide was too strong and she too heavily pregnant. The little rat, *nik-nik*,[94] however, was able to swim to safety.

Malwulwi's body is now a large tree in the mangrove swamps at Gunumungu. [824] On the trunk of this tree there are marks indicating three maximum water levels: [804] spring tides, usual tides and tides when, during the wet season, the fresh-water from the rivers floods the mangrove swamps.[95]

Plate 95D depicts *Malwulwi* in the mangrove swamp at Gunumungu, near Blue Mud Bay, where she used to collect oysters. The cross-hatched panels *a*, *a*, indicate the fresh-water from the river running among the mangrove trees and meeting the tide coming up from the bay. As mentioned in the myth, when the tide ebbs it leaves dark lines on the trunks of the trees.

Muruma, the Fisherman

In early times *Muruma*, a noted fisherman, lived with his wife beside a stream called Bamui, near the totemic place of Jalboa, north-east of Yirrkalla.

One day *Muruma*, having speared many fish, put them on the fire to cook. He was resting under a tree when one of the *Bukalatji* (enemies of *Muruma*) paid him a visit, saying that he and his wife were hungry, having just paddled all the way from Dambalia (Bremer Island). Little suspecting treachery, *Muruma* gave his cooked fish to the *Bukalatji*, who, after having eaten them, rose to go.

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[92] Interpretation, F. M. Setzler.

[93] This is the same as the *jiritja* cloud symbol of Cape Arnhem (Fig. 63H). It is also present in the art of the Celebes, Fig. 63R.

[94] See bark painting of the rat, *nik-nik*, and *Bourngauwili's* dog, *dulainuja*, Pl. 121A.

[95] These marks are indicated on the carved wooden figure of *Malwulwi*, Pl. 133C, D.

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After performing the dance of the tiger snake, *dunbania*, they each painted
the death mark of the snake on their faces[3] and cast their spears at the sleeping [796]
man. These passed through both his chest and carrying-bag, killing him instantly. 302]

The two brothers, waiting until the wives of *Djunmundia* returned from 628]
food-gathering, captured them and, putting them aboard the canoe, paddled to an island north of Bremer Island. During the night, however, the women escaped, swam to the mainland, and told the *Bukalatji*,[4] relatives of the murdered *Djunmundia*, how their husband had been murdered. When the two brothers discovered their loss they returned to their camp on Bremer Island.

During the next few days the *Bukalatji* worked hard making a number of [501]
bark canoes. Waiting until there was no moon, they launched them and paddled to Dambalia. Leaving their canoes to the north of the island, the *Bukalatji* crept through the low scrub to surround and kill *Tjuna-tjuna* and *Wururunga*. But the brothers heard them and, in their flight, came by chance on the bark canoes, [177]
which they started to cut to pieces with the large steel knives which the Malays had given them. They had almost finished their work of destruction when the head man of the *Bukalatji* came up and begged them not to destroy his own canoe, so that he could take all of his people home. The brothers relented and allowed the *Bukalatji* to depart.

After some time the two brothers left Bremer Island and went to live near Cape Wilberforce, where they met and married two women from the nearby islands. The wives were out collecting oysters one day when the *Bukalatji* again attacked the brothers and this time succeeded in killing them. This so enraged the women that they attacked the *Bukalatji* with the knives belonging to their
husbands and killed them all. *Tjuna-tjuna* and *Wururunga* were then trans- [823]
formed into goannas and their camps on Bremer Island into trees. Between those trees there is a path, which must be kept clean by the local aborigines.

On Pl. 98A the two brothers, at *a*, are paddling their canoe to the mainland. On the left, at *b*, they are holding their spear-throwers and avenging spears in their hands. The elder brother, *Tjuna-tjuna*, is on the right. At *c* is their enemy, *Djunmundia*, transfixed by the two avenging spears, one of which has passed through both his chest and his carrying-bag (cross-hatched oval). In the lower right panel *d*, black circles enclosing the goannas are totemic trees mentioned in the myth; the parallel lines, the path between them; and the curves, nearby sand-hills.

The Man, Balonarati, and the Paper-bark Trees of Matamataui [778]

Between Trial and Caledon Bays is a river, Gainmaui. Near this river is the [133]
Matamataui swamp,[5] about half a mile across and filled with paper-bark trees. [137]

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[3] The death mark, shown on the carved and painted head of *Bauaramin*, Pl. 139D, E, is painted on the faces of all the men who take part in an avenging ceremony.

[4] These are the mythical people who killed *Muruma*, the fisherman. See Pl. 96D.

[5] This swamp is also mentioned in the myth of the three men and the bush-fire, Pl. 93B.

[text continues on p. 307]

THE ART OF YIRRKALLA

During my stay at Yirrkalla a number of the *jiritja* aborigines of the *gumaitj* 616
mata produced paintings and decorated objects dealing with the totemic ancestors 773*
and the mythology of Cape Arnhem and Port Bradshaw. They were: 532*

Port Bradshaw

Baijini men and women	Pl. 107A
Spirit men, *Mokoi*	Pl. 109E, F
Hawksbill turtle, *kouwaradji*	Pl. 108C
Queen fish, *tinimbu*	Pl. 110B
Devil-ray, *mulara*	Pl. 110B
Stingray, *kawangalkmiri*	Pl. 108C
Octopus, *mainda*	Pl. 108C
Trepang, *teripi*	Pl. 110B

Cape Arnhem

Man, *Borolo-borolo*, and his wives, *Mainbuno* and *Wurungil*	Pl. 110D
Spirit men, *Mokoi*	Pl. 111A
Hawksbill turtle, *kouwaradji*	Pl. 109A
Queen fish, *tinimbu*	Pl. 106C
Devil-ray, *mulara*	Pl. 109C, D
Stingray, *kawangalk-miri*	Pl. 106D
Octopus, *mainda*	Pl. 106C
Serpent, *bilumbira*	Pl. 112A, D
Crocodile, *barou*	Pl. 122A
Rock cod, *kouper*	Pl. 106B
Whales, *morokundja* and *welerria*	Pl. 106D
Dugong, *merinjunga*	Pl. 109B

(a) PORT BRADSHAW

Mythical Human Beings

The Baijini

At Port Bradshaw there is a puzzling myth of a fair-skinned people who 773*
during early times went there in search of trepang. The aborigines assert that 173
the *Baijini* were not at Port Bradshaw during *bumun* (creation) times but were 177
there soon afterwards, long before the Malays started to visit the coasts of
Arnhem Land. The aborigines are certain the *Baijini* were not Malays, their
skin being much lighter in colour.[67] They brought their wives with them (the
Malays did not) and always carried a long knife, probably a sword. The uprights
of their houses were made of local timber but the walls were strips of bamboo
which the *Baijini* brought in their boats. The roof was thatched with unidenti-

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[67] The aborigines likened the skin of the *Baijini* to that of the sun-burned members of our party.

*773 fied palm leaves.[68] The smoking pipes of the *Baijini*, also, were unlike those of
173 the Malays,[69] but resembled those used by our own party. In fact, the aborigines
173 used to call our pipes *Baijini* pipes.

● 177 The *Baijini* may have been an isolated group of fair-skinned people, perhaps early Dutch or Portuguese, whose habits and appearance especially attracted the attention of the aborigines. The fact that the *Baijini* are now part of the mythology, as shown in the bark paintings and mentioned by Berndt,[70] does not necessarily indicate great age. The aborigines' songs of the Malay prau at Bickerton Island,[71] the bark paintings from Oenpelli of the *Mimi* with a European pipe[72], prove how the mythical stories keep up to date.

The *Baijini* party, which, in one myth, consisted of two men, two women and their children, came from a country to the north, called Jumaina. They sailed into Port Bradshaw and anchored at the mouth of a creek flowing into the south side of the harbour. As soon as they had established camp, the *Baijini* started to collect, cook and dry the trepang. The men, whom at first the aborigines looked upon as dangerous, always carried a long knife, *badi*.

One day, however, two aborigines, who had sneaked through the mangroves to have a look at the boat and its occupants, saw several small *Baijini* boys gathering cockles on the beach. The men, intrigued with the light colour of the boys' skin, crept closer to get a better view, when the boys, catching sight of the aborigines, beckoned them across. The *Baijini* children, equally puzzled about the dark colour of the aboriginal men,[73] felt them all over, and asked many
[640] questions, but neither group could understand the other. The *Baijini* children then took the aborigines by the hand, led them to a patch of jungle, and, motioning them to sit down, ran to tell their parents what had happened. Two *Baijini* men returned with their sons, coaxed the aborigines to their boat and gave them food. Although at first the men did not like the taste of the *Baijini* food, they soon became used to it. Later they stayed with the *Baijini* and helped them to collect trepang, bringing their wives and relatives to assist in the work.

*773 Seven bark paintings and two carved heads[74] depict the *Baijini*.

In Pl. 107A the four figures are the *Baijini* people at Port Bradshaw. Reading
*532 from the left their names are: *Tainitja*, *Ditjaru*, name forgotten, and *Gurumuluna*, whom the aborigines looked upon as the head man.[75] The men, *Tainitja* and *Gurumuluna*, are carrying large steel knives, one in either hand.

Plate 107B represents two *Baijini* men, the one on the right *Gurumuluna*, and the other unidentified. They are surrounded by *jiritja* cloud symbols, i.e. the triangular designs associated with the Cape Arnhem-Port Bradshaw area. The

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[68] Pl. 128A.
[69] p. 100.
[70] Berndt, R. and C. (1949), p. 219.
[71] p. 98.
[72] Pl. 49A.
[73] This suggests that the *Baijini* came from a country where the inhabitants were not as dark skinned as the aborigines.
[74] The carved heads are described in Part 5.
[75] On a carved head, Pl. 140B, *Gurumuluna* has a distinguishing badge on his forehead or hat.

*773 *532 an axe he used in the construction of his house. The six vertical lines in panel *a* are the posts of the house, made from local timber, and the cross-hatching between them, walls of plaited bamboo. The transverse panels *b*, *b*, are rafters of the roof (rectangles *c*, *c*) which were thatched with the leaves of an unidentified palm.

The three rectangles at *d* are wells the *Baijini* men dug, and the footmarks in the central vertical panel, those made by the men during their house-building. [777 276] The *Baijini* made their fire outside the house. Their pipes were similar to those used by Europeans.[79]

Spirit People

776 The spirit people, or *Mokoi* (the *dua* moiety call them *Wuna*) all appear to have been living people. At the present time, they pay occasional visits to the land of the living, where they spend most of their time in the jungles. Although the aborigines are somewhat afraid of the *Mokoi*, as indeed the *Mokoi* are of human beings,[80] I did not personally collect any evidence that they were ill-disposed toward living people. Warner,[81] however, refers to their malignant nature. We know little about the *Mokoi* and hope that later research will reveal more fully their place in the life and beliefs of the aborigines of north-eastern Arnhem Land.

The Mokoi, Rangi-rangi and Kultana, of Port Bradshaw

*773 During creation times two men, *Rangi-rangi* and *Kultana*,[82] both of them expert fishermen, came to Port Bradshaw to spear dugong. The day was so windy that the spray from the waves beating against the sides of the canoe rose into the sky, causing heavy thunder-clouds to form and rain to fall. This originated the first wet season. As soon as this happened the stingrays, heavily pregnant, travelled to the mangrove swamps to give birth to their young among the roots [825] of the trees. Since that time the young stingrays are always born among the roots of the mangroves at the beginning of the wet season.

The man, *Kultana*, is now one of the *Mokoi* who sometimes lives at Port [775] Bradshaw. It is his duty to assist the spirits of the dead during their journey from earth to the *jiritja* heaven, Nalkúma (p. 331).

*773 Plate 109E, F, is the obverse and reverse sides of a painted paddle.

*532 On panel *a* are the two men, *Rangi-rangi* and *Kultana*, in their canoe, which has since been transformed into a paper-bark tree. The cross-hatching below the canoe symbolizes the rough seas and that above the canoe, the clouds created by the spray from the waves. On panel *b* is the dugong, *balwakmeri*, with a dugong spear on either side. In panel *c* the two rain-clouds were created by the spray from the sides of the canoe. These same clouds are also painted in panel *c*.

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[79] See painted pipe, Pl. 128A.
[80] See myths of *Rangi-rangi* and *Kultana*, p. 346, and *Birikoi*, p. 348.
[81] Warner (1937), p. 73.
[82] *Kultana* is now the head man of the *jiritja* heaven, Nalkuma, p. 329.

776 *773 *532 There are two bark paintings illustrating the dugong hunt at the totemic place of the *Mokoi*, between Cape Arnhem and Port Bradshaw.

Plate 111A shows two *Mokoi* in a canoe hunting four dugongs. The black line between the two lower dugongs is the long dugong spear. The white cross-hatching in this panel indicates the rough seas which allowed the dugongs to escape. The upper and lower left-hand panels, *a* and *c*, are sand-banks near the totemic place of the dugongs and *b* is a mythical stingray. By burying itself in the sand the stingray has clouded the water so much that it has the appearance of smoke, indicated by cross-hatching.

Plate 111D deals with the same totemic place as the previous painting. On the lower right are two *Mokoi* in their canoe, and below them three queen fish, *tinimbu*. In the left-hand panel the four dugongs are being hunted by the *Mokoi* and on the upper right is the upturned canoe of the hunters, now a large rock on the seashore. Cross-hatching, as before, indicates rough seas which prevented the capture of the dugongs.

The Mokoi, Delururu, Rangi-rangi and Kultana

[616 775] Two brothers, *Delururu* and *Rangi-rangi*, accompanied by *Kultana*, who carry the spirits of the *jiritja* dead to their heaven, left Nalkuma in their canoe, *Lampu*, and paddled to the totemic place of the *Mokoi* at Cape Arnhem to spear dugongs. They had captured several and were resting on the beach when they saw a mortal man searching for turtle eggs. This gave the party such a fright that they hurried back to their canoe and paddled homeward as quickly as possible.[95]

In the centre of Pl. 111B are three *Mokoi* in their wooden canoe, called *Lampu*,[96] who have just speared a dugong. Reading from the left, their names are *Delururu*, *Rangi-rangi* and *Kultana*. The cross-hatching around the dugong is the rough sea water and the triangular patterns, *a*, the cumulus clouds created by the serpent, *bilumbira*. Above the canoe are five queen fish, *tinimbu*.

The Mokoi, Jambula and Bulanuna

Two *Mokoi*, a father, *Jambula*, and his son, *Bulanuna*, went to sea in their canoe, called *Tamalania*,[97] and speared a hawksbill turtle. This they took to a locality at Cape Arnhem, cooked and ate it. The canoe and the turtle are now parts of the topography of the coast of Cape Arnhem.

At *a*, on the right-hand panel of Pl. 111C, is *Jambula*, left, and his son, *Bulanuna*, returning to land with the turtle they have captured lying in the bottom of the canoe. An octopus and two queen fish are in the same panel. ● [177 When, in still weather, these queen fish jump out of the water they cause the

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[501] [95] This is a myth similar to that of *Birikiri* depicted on the engraved paddle, Fig. 58F.

[96] Wooden canoes are *jiritja* and bark canoes *dua*. This conforms to the custom of the 616] aborigines of north-eastern Arnhem Land of placing all modern objects in the *jiritja* moiety and the ancient ones in the *dua*. The canoes of the spirit people all have special names.

[551 [97] The aborigines have personal names for themselves, their dogs and their canoes.

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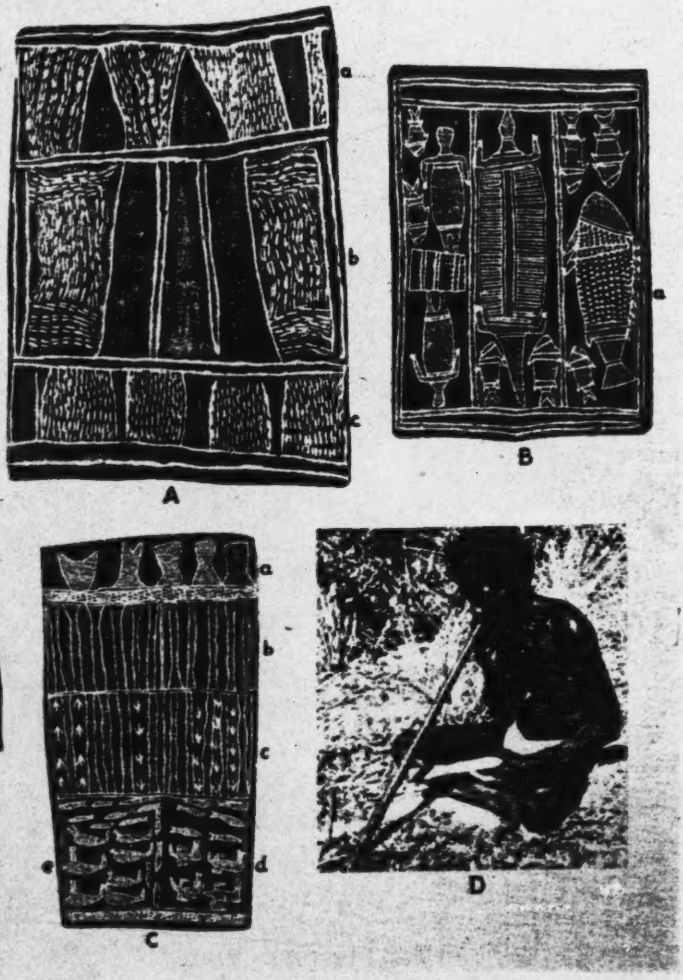

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PLATE 124. Bark paintings, Yirrkalla

A The man, Boriota, at Barralumba B Port Bradshaw C A mangrove swamp
D An aboriginal smoking a Malay pipe

THE ART OF YIRRKALLA

The Saw-fish, Nalgan

Plate 127C belongs to the saw-fish, *nalgan*, totem of Milingimbi. Four saw-fish 532
are depicted, two in the upper panel at *a*, *a*, and two in the lower at *b*, *b*. In the 778
lower panel a fresh-water tortoise is shown between the tails of the saw-fish. 823
Scattered throughout the drawing are small star-like designs which represent the star-fish, *midjala*. These fish provide food for the tortoises. The oval designs between the star-fish represent seaweed, *djiwul*, and the dots, its fruit. The two fish on the right side of the upper panel are called by the native name of *wungulbu*, and the three transverse cross-hatched panels, *c*, *c*, *c*, are sand-bars near the totemic place. There are three flying fish, *digar*, at the upper edge of the bark painting.

The Turtle, Wilira

The totemic place of the turtle, *wilira*, pictured in Pl. 127D, is an island called Nalgunin-nuna, situated north-west of Elcho Island. The triangular patterns occupying most of the surface of the bark painting are clouds created by the three turtles spraying water into the sky. Two king-fish are shown in the clouds, one at *a* and one at *b*.

2. SMOKING PIPES AND MYTHS

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As far as I am aware the long smoking pipe, Fig. 59A, B, is used in Australia
only by the aborigines of Arnhem Land and the adjacent islands. [171]

Tobacco smoking was introduced by the Malays within the last century or so when they visited Australia during their periodical journeys to collect trepang and pearl shell, though the *Baijini* myth suggests that the aborigines may have
become acquainted with tobacco at an even earlier date. After the Common- [648]
wealth Government, about 1910, prohibited the Malays from coming to Australia
the aborigines continued to use the Malay pipe, smoking either a substitute or [439
European tobacco, occasionally issued by white traders and missionaries. 797]

In general, the pipes[70] are made in a few minutes from the pithy stem of a 276
shrub (*Guettarda speciosa*). The aboriginal removes the pith with a thin stick,
plugs one end with bark, cuts a hole in the side an inch or more from the end, [824]
fits a bowl[71] saved from the old pipe, and, except for the engraving, the pipe is complete.

The pipes I collected are about an inch in diameter and varied in length [171]
from eight inches at Groote Eylandt to thirty inches at Yirrkalla, Fig. 59B. It was necessary to have a longer pipe stem at Yirrkalla so that there would be sufficient room for the totemic designs. In use, Pl. 124D, the aboriginal takes a

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[70] The bowls of the early pipes were made of tin-plate and carefully treasured. Since the [177]
last war, most pipe bowls are made from shortened cartridge cases. As mentioned earlier, the aborigines recognize the difference between the *Baijini* pipes, which are similar to those used by Europeans, and those of the Malays. The *Baijini* were a mysterious group of fair-skinned people who once camped at Port Bradshaw, myth, p. 333.

[71] Warner (1937), p. 461, refers to the smoking pipes of the Murngin, near Milingimbi, and Elkin and the Berndts (1950), p. 102, to those at Yirrkalla.

[text continues on p. 391]

*773
*532 male, left, is entering it. The background design[78] represents the fallen leaves of an unidentified palm. The symbols in panel *c* represent the fallen leaves of the same tree. In panel *d* the male and female goannas are travelling in the one direction. The background is the same as elsewhere, fallen palm leaves.

The Man, Oijal

This myth has already been related in association with the relevant bark paintings of *Oijal* and his sister, *Neri-neri*.[79]

The designs on this pipe, Fig. 62B, belong to a large hill, Tjiruru, the totemic place where *Oijal* cooked his honey. The two groups of long parallel lines, *f, f*, in the left-hand panel symbolize the river, Wandaraui, which was created when the brother and sister felled a tall tree in their search for honey. The sloping lines, *b, b*, are the subsidiary streams that run into Wandaraui River, which, in turn, empties its waters into Melville Bay. The small gutters made in the surrounding plains by the wet-season floods are shown by the marks *c, c*. Lines *e* indicate the hill, Tjiruru, the totem place of *Oijal* and *Neri-neri*. In the right-hand panel, the groups of crescent-shaped lines, *a, a*, picture the boomerangs of *Oijal*. The transverse marks on the boomerangs are lines of paint.

The Fresh-water Goanna, Bije

The fresh-water goanna, *bije*, found yellow ochre near a stream at Gurunga, [317] a few miles south of Caledon Bay. Since then the men of the *jiritja* moiety have visited that place to collect their ochres.[80]

In panel *c*, Fig. 62C, the fresh-water goanna is lying among the rocks and water of his totemic place. The designs with the transverse bars in panels *a, c*, and *d* symbolize the fresh water running between reefs of yellow ochre (the blank spaces). The groups of parallel lines at *b* indicate where it is possible to ford the stream. Panel *d* shows where the stream, discovered by the water-goanna, enters the ground and disappears.

The Man, Ngulamung, Blue Mud Bay

The myth of this *jiritja* pipe centres round the mythical man *Ngulamung*, who frequented the swamps in the *malarapa* clan country, at Blue Mud Bay, to collect water-lily bulbs, *jouku*. As *Ngulamung* collected the bulbs, he put [252] them in a carrying-bag, took them to his camp and, raking back the embers, buried the bag, bulbs and all in the hot sand and ashes.[81] Two other totem creatures are included in the engraved design, the teredo worm, *kaulu-warak*, and the fish, *bunumba*.

Fig. 62D is the complete design of the pipe. In panel *a* are two fresh-water fish, *bunumba*, the meandering lines originating at the tail of the upper fish

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[78] This is similar to the *mata* design of the *ngrimil* language group of Arnhem Bay, Fig. 61B.

[79] Myth, p. 292.

[80] See myth, p. 371, also bark painting, Pl. 110B.

[253
177] [81] The aborigines claim that this method of cooking water lily bulbs was used in times past. It has been discarded in more recent years.

*773 *532 symbolizing its wake. Designs *b*, *b* are two trees at the totemic place, the transformed bodies of the fish, *bunumba*. The four ovals in panel *c* are masses of eggs belonging to the same fish; they are now sand-banks. In panel *f*, the line of footprints at *d* are those of *Ngulamung* as he walked to the swamps to collect lily bulbs, and at *e* those he made on his return journey. At *g*, *g* are the bags in which he cooked the bulbs, and *h*, *h*, the cooked bulbs.

In the lower panel, *j*, the lozenge-shaped figures are the bulbs of the lily, *jouku*, and *n*, their roots. The triangular patterns along the upper edge of panel *j* represent a sharp-edged grass growing in the swamp which cuts the legs of the aborigines; *k* is the toredo worm, *kaula-warak*, whose totemic place is also at Blue Mud Bay.

The Man, Wanamungaria, of Blue Mud Bay

[614] The complete design on this *jiritja* pipe refers to the fresh-water swamps, the sandy beach, the rocks near the shore, the open sea, and a mythical man, *Wanamungaria*, all belonging to the *malarapa* clan country of Blue Mud Bay. The pipe is divided into two sections, the symbols on panel *a* picturing the swamps, and on the other, *d*, the sea, its creatures and the canoe of the mythical man, *Wanamungaria*.

Panel *a* of Fig. 63A is a fresh-water swamp covered with water-lilies, *jouku* (unidentified). The designs, *c*, are the leaves, and *b* the bulbs. The parallel lines, *d*, indicate the beach which separates the swamp from the sea. The lower panel, *k*, pictures the coast and the open sea. At *e* is an engraving of the canoe of *Wanamungaria*, with the four paddles lying in the bottom. The canoe has since been transformed into a large rock, *j*, on the sea coast. The lines *f* represent the open sea, *g* a dugong, and *h* a queen fish.

The Wrecked Canoe at Port Bradshaw

● 177 276 *532 In recent years, during a heavy storm, a large outrigger canoe, possibly from Papua, was cast up on the shore between Cape Arnhem and Port Bradshaw.[82] The designs on the canoe inspired one of the *jiritja* men to engrave this pipe.

Fig. 63B was covered, for most of its length, with triangles resembling the cloud symbols used on the *jiritja* paintings of the Cape Arnhem and Port Bradshaw aborigines. Both these and the meandering designs at the end of the pipe are supposed to be a copy of those the artist saw on the canoe. This is the only example in my collection of Arnhem Land art about which the artist was unable to explain the meanings of the symbols he used.

The Yam, Trial Bay

*632 I did not gather any other details about the mythological story associated with this pipe, Fig. 63C, except that it belonged to the yam totem of Trial Bay.

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[82] The aborigines believe that these canoes are sent to them by the inhabitants of the *jiritja* 'heaven'. Nalkuma. Myth. p. 331.

[text continues on p 400]

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956   **OI17 Murngin OI17**

*773
*532
●177

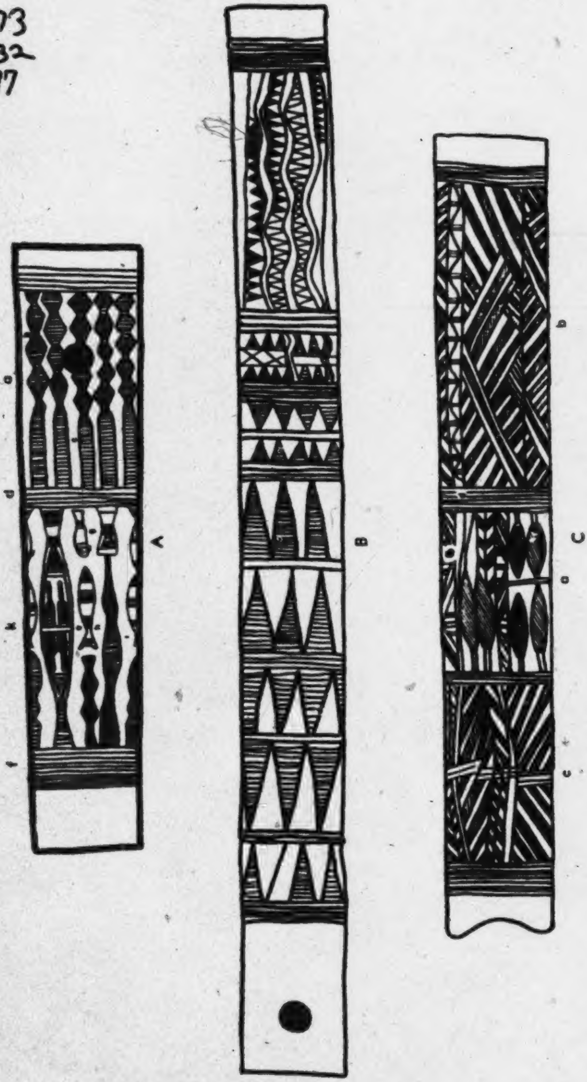

FIG. 63. Engraved smoking pipes, Yirrkalla
A The man, Wanamungaria   B The wrecked canoe at Port Bradshaw   C The man, Tualpa

design of the *riredjingu mata* of Port Bradshaw changes to sloping lines which 61 symbolize fallen palm leaves. This *ngeimil* design is used on a bark painting, 532* Pl. 123A, and an engraved pipe, Fig. 64A. 773*

Figure 64F is an unidentified design associated with the *Djunkgao* sisters west of Arnhem Bay. Although it is not certain that this is a *mata* design, the fact that it is used on two bark paintings, Pl. 87A, B, associated with waterholes belonging to the *Djunkgao* sisters, suggests that it might be so.

Figure 64G is the *djambarpingu mata* design. It represents the geese, *wurumatji*, and their tracks at the Duwalaila swamps east of Arnhem Bay. This design [302] was painted on a sacred object, Pl. 128C, and on the body of an initiate, Pl. 129D. The *djambarpingu mata* is an excellent example of how a *mata* (language group) spreads over a number of *mala* (clan groups). According to Warner,[12] the *djambarpingu* language group includes the following adjacent clans or *malas*: *liagaomir, djirin, gwiyula, djapu, naladaer* and *djawark*. Further research will, no doubt, reveal that this characteristic applies to a number of the language groups.

THE POSSIBLE ORIGIN OF THE MATA DESIGNS

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An examination of Indonesian art revealed that many of the *jiritja mata* 177 designs from north-eastern Arnhem Land are present in the art of the Central 532* Celebes. As the Celebes and other Indonesian islands are north-west, and the natives from those islands sailed to Australia on the north-west wet-season wind, returning to their homes on the dry-season south-easterly, it is not surprising that their art motifs should have diffused among the aborigines of north-eastern Arnhem Land, particularly among those of the *jiritja* moiety, who have adopted all the later innovations of the Asiatic trepangers and the white man—for example tobacco, wooden canoes, the Malay smoking pipe and so on. As mentioned previously (p. 325), the *dua* moiety possesses the older things, bark canoes, spear-throwers and stone spears. Nevertheless, one of the *dua mata* designs, the *djapu*, Fig. 61A, was found on an engraved smoking pipe from southern New Guinea.

Figure 64O, a cloth design from the Central Celebes,[13] somewhat resembles the *mangalili jiritja mata* design painted on the left thigh of *Laitjun*, Pl. 135A.

Figure 64Q, another cloth design from the same area,[14] resembles the *gumaitj mata* design (Fig. 64N).

Figure 64R, also a cloth design from the Central Celebes,[15] is similar to the triangular *jiritja* cloud symbol from Cape Arnhem.[16] This design, which is common in Central Celebian art, was also found on a wooden drum from the Tugeri tribe, Dutch New Guinea.[17] According to the aboriginal who engraved

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[12] Warner (1937), pp. 43-6.

[13] Kaudern (1944). A, Fig. 166.

[14] Kaudern (1944). 2. Pl. LXIII.

[15] Kaudern (1944). 3. Pl. XXIV.

[16] Pl. 107D.

[17] Collection of South Australian Museum. No. A9250.

174
177 the smoking pipe illustrated in Fig. 63B, this triangular pattern was engraved on
*532 a canoe which had been cast up on the beach near Port Bradshaw.

Figure 64P, a rubbing from a smoking pipe from southern New Guinea,[18] is almost a duplicate of the *dua djapu mata* design, Fig. 61A.

CONCLUSIONS

171 *532 The art of the north-east coast differs from the art of the rest of Arnhem Land in several important respects: (a) it is more complicated and colourful; (b) there are a number of alien symbols which indicate that it has been influenced by sources outside Australia, but that this influence is of comparatively recent origin; and (c) certain designs are the exclusive property of specified groups of aborigines.

(a) Whereas the basic art of Arnhem Land consists of single or multiple figures on a plain ground, that on the north-eastern coasts has a wide range of designs, skilfully and interestingly arranged within the painting area. There are few open spaces, as in the basic art, the background of almost all of the paintings being filled in with attractive arrangements of cross-hatching in red, yellow, black and white. The designs, their pleasing arrangement and the colourful textures of the cross-hatching, make the art of north-eastern Arnhem Land the most decorative that we know of in Australia. In contrast with the Oenpelli art, however, that of the north-east has no unusual designs such as X-ray and 'hocker' figures, 'joint marks', men with hook-shaped faces. Nor does it, like the *Mimi* art of Oenpelli, depict human beings in action.

The art of the north-east is essentially a static art with all the subjects at rest. The north-eastern art also has a number of abstract designs which cannot be interpreted without the aid of the artist who produced them.

177 171 *532 (b) All evidence suggests that many of the elements in the decorative north-eastern art are of recent origin. It is known that the aborigines, about two generations ago, adopted the practice of carving human figures in the round from their Indonesian visitors and it is likely that they have copied, from the same source, many of the complicated art forms, cross-hatched designs, and at least some of the symbols used by the clan and language groups.

Pobassoo, the Macassan chief, told Flinders, when they met in the Malay Roads during 1803,[19] that twenty years previously he was the first Indonesian to visit the north-eastern coast of Arnhem Land. If Pobassoo's statement was correct, and we have no evidence as yet to the contrary, then we can assume that the aborigines of those parts had not been subject to foreign influences before that date. This hypothesis is further supported by the fact that the art of the north-eastern Arnhem Land has not spread far inland. It is confined to a limited area near the coast, even though the myths and ceremonies depicted on the bark

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[18] Collection of South Australian Museum, No. A10261.

[19] Flinders (1814), vol. 2, p. 229.

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paintings and other art objects are performed, with little variation, over most of Arnhem Land (Fig. 2). 171 [177]

(c) Another characteristic of the art of north-eastern Arnhem Land is that certain designs, or arrangements of designs, are the exclusive property of individual clan or language groups. Some of these, according to the myths, were first [424] produced by a mythical forbear, the ancestor of the totemic group which owns that particular design. The fact that many of these are present in the art of the Celebes suggests a link between the two areas and is worthy of more investigation.

*532 171 from Central Australia. Balfour[11] also figures a stone penis which is linked with the myth of the rain-man from Korporilja, near Hermannsburg, Central Australia.[12]

W. E. Harney, whilst with the expedition, found a carved wooden penis associated with a mythical man, *Borolo-borolo*, set up in the middle of a saline flat.[13]

The examples of the human penis, particularly those carved in stone, exhibit a remarkable skill in the shaping of this hard material. They constitute an ethnological problem in a continent where the working of stone has not reached a high level.

Carved and Painted Ceremonial Objects. Whilst the expedition was at Oenpelli the aborigines brought in a number of sacred objects, most of them from the Liverpool River area, belonging to mythical creatures and their increase ceremonies. Spencer[14] illustrates a number of these objects.

[411] *Decorated Implements and Weapons.* Although the shield and the boomerang (two objects which aborigines in other parts of Australia spend much time decorating) are not used in Arnhem Land, many of the paddles and spear-throwers are painted with designs which, almost without exception, refer to some myth. The aborigines also engrave designs on their long smoking pipes.

1. HUMAN FIGURES IN WOOD AND THEIR CEREMONIAL OBJECTS, YIRRKALLA

*532 177 *Human Figures carved in wood.* At Yirrkalla I collected nine full-length wooden human figures and eight heads, all of which represented either mythological or spirit people.

Origin. Inquiries about the carved human figures of north-eastern Arnhem Land proved that they are of comparatively recent origin.

[764] *Mauwulan*,[15] an aboriginal about fifty years of age, remembers, when he was a small boy, seeing an old Macassan trepanger, *Bopalindi*, show his father, *Duankin*, how to carve a human head on the top of a burial post. This post *Bopalindi* later placed as a memorial on the grave of a dead Macassan.[16] *Duankin* spent much time carving a similar post, which he took to the Macassan for criticism. *Bopalindi*, when congratulating the old man on his effort, suggested that the aborigines, like the people of his own country, should place similar posts on the graves of their dead so that they would not be forgotten so quickly.

Duankin taught his son, *Mauwulan*, the art of carving the mortuary posts,[17] he in turn passing the knowledge to others. As the aboriginal craftsmen became

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[11] Balfour (1951), p. 246.

[12] I have not personally examined this specimen but from the illustration it appears to be a natural stone, bearing a remarkable resemblance to a penis. Mountford (1939c), Pl. 8, Fig. C, illustrates a similar example.

[13] Pl. 110C; myth, p. 311.

[14] Spencer (1928), Figs. 542, 543, Pl. XVI.

[115] [15] *Mauwulan*, one of my best informants (Pl. 4A) carved many of these wooden figures for me. He did the same for Mr and Mrs Berndt.

[16] Berndts (1949) describe a Macassan burial.

[17] See example, Pl. 126C.

more expert they experimented with the carved figures until at the present time 532*
they are able to produce a creditable representation of the human form (see
Pl. 135A, B).

From that time until comparatively recently the *jiritja*[18] men adopted the 764
Macassan custom of using carved grave posts, but only when the body was buried 616
instead of being placed on a platform. When a *jiritja* man died, his moiety asked
a *dua* man to carve a mortuary post to place on the grave.[19] Later, when the 532*
body was disinterred and the burial dances were being performed a *jiritja* man,
taking the mortuary post with him, went from camp to camp collecting food for
the participants in the burial rituals.[20] At the completion of the meal the post
was replaced on the empty grave.

The chief interest of the carved human figures lies in the fact that in a little 532*
over two generations the aborigines, without the help and for most of the time 177 ●
without even the knowledge of the white man, have taken a simple post figure
of foreign origin and through improvement of techniques can now carve in wood
heads and full-length human figures of considerable merit.

The Rev. F. W. Chaseling, when a missionary at Yirrkalla, was the first to 532*
discover that the aborigines of that locality were carving the human figure in 797
the round. This discovery came about in a curious manner. When King George V 114
died, Chaseling, in one of his sermons, expressed grief at the great loss the nation
had suffered. This sermon and the concern of the missionary over the loss of his
king so impressed *Mauwulan* that he carved a mortuary post,[21] similar to those
used on the *jiritja* graves, but which was supposed to resemble the King. This
post *Mauwulan* presented to the missionary so that he would be reminded of his
dead monarch. Chaseling, in 1938, realizing the importance of his discovery,
presented the mortuary post to the Australian Museum, Sydney. Unfortunately
the Museum authorities, unaware that the post was a unique example of
aboriginal handicraft, did not describe it in a scientific journal.

I was able to examine this figure early in 1949. It was the head of a bearded man (Pl. 138C, D) cut on the end of a hardwood post about four feet long and five inches in diameter. The face, about five inches long, consisted of eyes, a nose, lips and ears; the ears, however, being somewhat out of position.[22] The body of the pole is decorated with ceremonial string.

I also collected at Yirrkalla a number of human heads carved in wood, most 532*
of them representing spirit people or *Mokoi* who live in the surrounding jungles 776
and eucalyptus forests.

[illegible]

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[18] This was because the aborigines made *Bopalindi* a member of the *jiritja* moiety.

[19] According to Warner (1937), p. 434, at Milingimbi burial posts are placed on the graves.

[20] Warner (1937), p. 433, describes this food-collecting ritual at Milingimbi, and the Berndts (1949), p. 216, at Yirrkalla.

[21] Warner (1937), p. 504, refers to a burial post being erected on the aboriginal graves at Milingimbi. Elkin and the Berndts (1950), p. 40, record the finding of a burial post figure at the same locality.

[22] I am indebted to the Australian Museum, Sydney, for the photograph of this specimen, E.46535, and the relevant details.

*532 [178] The aborigines told me that, prior to the visit of Mr and Mrs Berndt to Yirrkalla during 1947, they had not carved these small heads. But when they made one and showed it to Mr and Mrs Berndt, the interest shown stimulated them to make more.[23] These little examples of aboriginal craftsmanship, many showing evidence of considerable skill, prove the ability of the aboriginal craftsmen to adapt themselves to changing conditions.

*532 881 114 *Function.* Elkin and the Berndts[24] state that the carved figures they illustrate of 'the Elder Wauwelak Sister, the Great Laintjung, and Laintjung's son Banaitja' are shown only to initiated men. They write: "The original artist who has made the figure enters the hut; outside, the postulants are sitting or standing with faces turned away, but when the songman begins to clap his sticks, they are led up to look upon the sacred object. Finally, when the singing is completed, the designs on the figure are explained and discussed. At times, during the showing of the object, the figure may be held ritually by an actor who writhes on the ground like the python who swallowed the Wauwelak sisters.'

During my last visit to Yirrkalla (1952) I questioned the aborigines about these statements. The men of both moieties were emphatic that they were incorrect and that the carved figures they had produced for Mr Berndt and me are purely secular and would not be used in any of the secret rituals.[25]

They explained, however, that pole figures (similar to the Chaseling figure) representing *Djunkgao* and his sister *Madalait* are kept in special huts near the ceremonial grounds where the *Djunkgao* ceremonies are being performed. The figure of *Djunkgao* is shown to all the initiated men, but that of *Madalait* to only a few of the older tribal leaders.

*532 778 The pole figures of *Djunkgao* and *Madalait* are carved in hard wood, painted with the appropriate designs and decorated with *dua* ceremonial string. At the completion of the rituals the string is removed for future use and the posts, with other sacred objects, buried in the mud of a sacred waterhole.[26] The following year the same figures are taken out, re-painted and re-decorated. They usually last about three years.

*532 The carved figures in my collection, *Tjambuwal*, *Laitjun*, or even the carved figures of *Djunkgao* and *Madalait*, would not have been used in any sacred ceremonies. They were produced because the native men enjoyed making them and because we were interested.

*532 ●177 322 *Methods of Manufacture.* During the last war there was a large Air Force camp near Yirrkalla where, at one time or another, most of the able-bodied aborigines were employed. During that time the aborigines not only learned the

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[23] Elkin and the Berndts (1950), Pl. 9, illustrate a number of the carved heads collected by Mr and Mrs Berndt.

[24] Elkin and the Berndts (1950), p. 50.

[25] Elkin and the Berndts (1950), p. 58, state that the carved heads 'are shown to novices at initiation, and to postulants at ceremonies of revelation'.

[26] Warner (1937), p. 376, describes how the sacred objects of the *dua narra* ceremonies (analagous to those of *Djunkgao* at Yirrkalla) are buried in the mud of the sacred totemic waterhole.

use of steel tools, but acquired for themselves a stock of jungle knives, tomahawks, 532*
wood rasps and files. With these tools the aborigines cut and filed the wooden 177
figures into shape with much dexterity. 322

In sharp contrast to these facts is the account given by Elkin and the Berndts.[27] When describing the manufacture of the carved figures at Yirrkalla, these authors wrote: "The artist chips it [the figure] skilfully with a knife or a broad "shovel-nosed" spear-point. . . . The artist spends several days[28] carving in the details and scraping the surface smooth with a knife blade, rough stone or piece of shark's skin "sand paper".'

As Mr and Mrs Berndt were at Yirrkalla less than a year previous to our arrival (the Air Force camp at that time had not long been disbanded) the aborigines would then have had as many, if not more, steel tools than at the time of our visit. It is not reasonable therefore to expect that the aborigines would have been using the primitive tools reported by Elkin and the Berndts.

Tjambuwal, the Thunder-man, and his Ceremonial Objects

Two figures of the mythical thunder-man, *Tjambuwal*, were collected, Pl. 776
130A, B, and Pl. 130E, F; myth, p. 282.

Associated with these carved figures are five ceremonial objects used in the 778
dua ceremonies of the thunder-man. They are: the club, *burungunda* (Pl. 130D), 532*
with which *Tjambuwal* strikes the cliff; the spear, *larapan* (Pl. 130J), with which he spears the rock cod, *akurata*; the club, *barlait* (Pl. 130C), with which he kills the fish; the ceremonial object, *munan* (Pl. 130G, H), symbolizing the loops of clouds, *wulmu*, belonging to the thunder-man; and the yam, *bualku or bawal* (Pl. 131E) created from the fragments of the club, *burungunda*.

The symbolism of the designs on the *Tjambuwal* figure, Pl. 130A, B, refers 773*
to the time when, at the beginning of the wet season, he strikes the cliffs at
Jalboa headland (Pl. 91E) with his club and throws the white stones, *milarik* 532*
(Pl. 91F) into the sky. These stones quickly increase in size until they become large cumulus clouds, in which *Tjambuwal* travels from place to place.

The two lines meeting at an angle across the front of the figure (Pl. 130B), and the diagonal lines across the back, symbolize crevices which *Tjambuwal* made in Jalboa headland when he struck it with his club, *burungunda* (Pl. 130D). The vertical lines on the back of the head (Pl. 130A) symbolize falling rain, and the arc-shaped panels on both the back and the front of the figure, the gutters in the distorted rock strata of the cliffs at Jalboa, which were supposedly formed when *Tjambuwal* urinated on the cliff.

The symbolism of the designs on the second figure of *Tjambuwal*, illustrated on Pl. 130E, F, is somewhat different. The spots on the diagonal band across the chest of the figure (Pl. 130E) picture the white stones, *milarik*, at Jalboa headland (Pl. 91F). The curving lines to the right of this band are cumulus clouds,

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[27] Elkin and the Berndts (1950), p. 49.

[28] The more expert of the aboriginal craftsmen I saw in 1948 were able to complete and paint a human figure in about seven hours, and a carved head in four.

[text continues on p 421]

CARVED AND PAINTED FIGURES

The designs on the head of *Duwuliana*, Pl. 139B, C, all refer to rain, hail and thunder-clouds. The dots on the face of B are hail-stones, and the cross-hatched panel across the forehead, small clouds. On the side of the head, Pl. 139C, the cross-hatched panels indicate falling rain, and the white crown, the tops of cumulus clouds. 532* 776 778

The Baijini Man, Tankupou

Plate 139F, G pictures the carved head of a *Baijini* man, *Tankupou*, who once lived at Port Bradshaw.[83] The black rectangle on the forehead, Pl. 139F, is the pillow of *Tankupou*, and the cross-hatched panel beneath, the pillow-slip. The designs on Pl. 139G all refer to the cotton goods owned by the *Baijini*, and the vertical lines on the neck to the posts of the *Baijini* house. 177 773* 532*

The Baijini Man, Gurumuluna

Gurumuluna was the head man of the *Baijini* visitors to Port Bradshaw. He is now included in the pantheon of mythical beings who created the topography of Port Bradshaw. [776]

Plate 140A, B, C pictures the carved head of *Gurumuluna*. The designs on the forehead, Pl. 140B, indicate a distinguishing badge which, according to my informants, is similar to that worn by a ship's captain. The two triangles in front of the ear, Pl. 140C, are the cotton sheets for *Gurumuluna's* bed, and the cross-hatched rectangle in the same position on Pl. 140A, his pillow. The cross-hatched triangles on the top of the head and behind the ears represent the roof of the house of the *Baijini*, which was constructed of bamboo rafters and palm-tree thatch. The parallel vertical lines on the neck refer to the upright posts of the house.

The Spirit Man, Jindjaraui 532*

The spirit man, *Jindjaraui*, lives on the shores of a swamp west of Arnhem Bay. This *Mokoi* carries a long steel knife in his hair which, when he strikes it, gives off a clear bell-like note. This sound guides the *jiritja* spirits of the dead belonging to the Arnhem Bay area to *Jindjaraui's* camp, one of the *jiritja* 'heavens'.[84] 773* 776 [775]

Plate 139J, K illustrates the carved head of the *Mokoi*, *Jindjaraui*. The dark-coloured triangle above the ear on Pl. 139K is the blade of the steel knife the *Mokoi* carries in his hair and the cross-hatched rectangle below, its handle. The cross-hatching on either side of the knife indicates clouds and the dots on the top

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[83] For more complete details of the *Baijini* myth, see p. 333.

[84] Berndt (1948), p. 94, claims that the spirits of the *jiritja* dead from Yirrkalla go to Badu (Mulgrave Island) in the Torres Straits. He, however, refers to fifteen other names for the *jiritja* heaven. Although my *jiritja* informants from Yirrkalla stated emphatically that their spirits went to Nalkuma (p. 331), not to Badu, and I did not obtain such a large number of designations for the *jiritja* home of the dead as did Berndt, the myth associated with *Jindjaraui* indicates that there is more than one *jiritja* heaven. The *dua* moiety at Yirrkalla, on the other hand, refer to only one heaven, i.e. Purelko (myth, p. 325), although the *dua* moiety of Milingimbi call their land of the dead Djirain. [114 775]

ceremonial message sticks, they were all personal requests for food, tobacco and 211
other goods used by the white man. I feel sure, however, that fuller research would reveal many more examples of the ceremonial type.

Whilst at Yirrkalla and Oenpelli I had to fly to Darwin several times on 211
expedition matters. Each time I went one or more aborigines gave me message 202
sticks to deliver to their friends at Darwin. My procedure (after I had made a 177●
record of the message stick either by a sketch or a rubbing) was to write the meanings of the various symbols on a sheet of paper, wrap the paper round the message stick and enclose it in an envelope, on the outside of which I wrote the name of the recipient as a guide to my memory. When I delivered the message stick, which I did on all but two occasions, I was able to explain to the recipient the significance of the marks on the message stick by referring to my notes.

(I) YIRRKALLA

While the expedition party was at Yirrkalla we received a visit from a white 211
man who, according to the aborigines, had bought their seed pearls and tortoise- 202
shell, but had not paid for them. A number of aborigines carved message sticks, 439
which they delivered to the visitor by hand to remind him of his debt. At the same time, the aborigines added a request for a number of items of clothing and luxuries in the forlorn hope that some day he might send them along. Before the message sticks were delivered, I was able to make rubbings of two, one from *Bununga*, Fig. 66C, and another from *Mungarani*, Fig. 67C, E.

(a) SECULAR MESSAGE STICKS

On Fig. 66C, which is *Bununga's* message stick, the upper three lines, *a*, 211
represent three boxes of matches, *b*, two blankets, and *c*, singlets. Triangle *e* 532*
refers to the nineteen shillings debt owing to *Bununga* for some time; *d* is a request for shirts, *m* for two fishing lines, *n* for calico, and *o* for tobacco.

Fig. 67E is *Mungarani's* message stick to the same white man. The central dot, *a*, is the white man, the recipient of the message stick. The triangle *b* is a request for a towel, *c*, *c*, *c* for loin cloths, *d* a new belt, *e* a knife, *f* a mirror, *g* razor blades, *h* two fishing lines, *j* trousers, *k* shirt, *l* hair comb, and *m* hair oil.

On the reverse side, Fig. 67C, the upper cross-hatched carving is pure decoration. The line *n* is the sender, *Mungarani*. The triangles, *o*, refer to the money owing to him for seed pearls and tortoise-shell; *p* is a request for a bag of flour, *q* for sugar, *r* for sticks of tobacco. *Mungarani* referred to *s* as the 'asking' line.[48]

Figure 66E, F illustrates a message stick sent by *Wandjuk* at Yirrkalla to his partner, *Barnmala*, in the ceremonial exchange cycle of Arnhem Land.[49]

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[48] This 'asking' symbol is also engraved on Fig. 67C, *s*, *t*, *q*, *w*, *x*, *z*.

[49] Donald Thomson (1949) has given us a full description of the economic structure and ceremonial exchange system of Arnhem Land. The stone-headed spears, *numbu*, asked for by *Wandjuk* travel only in a southerly direction, while the articles from Yirrkalla, i.e. stone axes, ceremonial bags and feather ornaments, move in the opposite direction. The types of articles and their direction of travel are indicated in Fig. 2 of Thomson's book. [439]

SACRED FIGURES OF ANCESTRAL BEINGS OF ARNHEM LAND.

By R. M. Berndt and C. H. Berndt

THIS paper consists of brief notes recording ten carved human figures from Yirrkalla in north-eastern Arnhem Land, Northern Territory of Australia, obtained during recent anthropological field-work (1946-47) in that region. They are part of a unique series of 51 human figures carved by aboriginal men,[1] all of indigenous inspiration and execution. Like sacred and secular ritual objects of a conventionalized type in other parts of aboriginal Australia, they have a very definite place in the social life of the natives. 532 778

The figures collected belong to seven groups, and may be divided into secular and sacred objects, as follows:

Sacred:

Group 1. Major Ancestral Beings.
" 2. Minor Ancestral Beings and Spirits.
" 3. Secular Figures bearing sacred totemic designs.

Secular:

Group 4. Figures based on Macassan burial posts and representations of Macassans; these are known as *'wurəmu* or "Collection Men" and are associated especially with certain secular camp ceremonies. [177]
" 5. 'Baijini, or figures based on pre-Macassan contact—these are related to the *'wurəmu* (4).
" 6. 'Ba:du Spirits—being figures of Spirit Men and Women from the Torres Strait Islands.
" 7. 'Wura:tila:gu or Groote Eylandt Woman's Spirit—which has some bearing on woman's life.

A paper on groups 4 and 5 has been prepared for publication, in which eight *'wurəmu* and five *'Baijini* figures have been briefly described. In this article we discuss Group I, which contains the most sacred representatives of the Ancestral Beings of this region, and also Group 2, the Minor Ancestral Beings and Spirits, which play a subsidiary part in sacred ritual, mythology and song cycles.

It is not possible, in such a limited space, to describe in detail the ritual associated 800 with each figure, and its complex background: each sacred representation of a

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[1] These are kept in the Department of Anthropology, Sydney University, on behalf of the Australian National Research Council, under whose auspices the writers have worked for some years.

880 particular spirit-being has its mythology, ceremonies and elaborate song cycles, some consisting of several hundreds of separate and lengthy songs. This is particularly the case with the concept of the *'Wauwəlak* Sisters, which have both sacred and secular songs and ceremonies.[2]

101 The aborigines of this area belong to what Professor Lloyd Warner has called the "Murngin" culture.[3] They consist of groups of separate clans with a more or less common cultural background[4]: "Murngin" is one name of one of these many clans. [131] They stretch from a point north of Rose River on the south-east of Arnhem Land (opposite Groote Eylandt) north along the coast through Blue Mud and Caledon Bays, Cape Arnhem and Yirrkalla, English Company, Wessell and Elcho Islands, Arnhem Bay, Crocodile Islands (around Milingimbi) to Cape Stewart, but do not penetrate far into the interior. Their dialects vary, but belong to one language group.[5] The clans are divided between the *'jiritʃa* and *'du:a* patrilineal moieties. 185 A subsection system is being gradually introduced from the south and south-west, but has not yet been fully accepted.

These natives are semi-nomadic and hunt and collect food over wide areas. They rely principally on marine foods, which are plentiful, so that their economy is more or less balanced throughout the whole year.

177 For many years these coastal aborigines have been in direct and indirect contact with alien groups, particularly with the Malayan and Macassan traders who travelled down to the north coast of Australia from the East Indies in search of trepang (bêche de mer) and other natural products obtained by local aborigines.[6] In the course of years of trading, these visitors had much association with the indigenous inhabitants, and established settlements at desirable sites, particularly on the north-eastern corner of Arnhem Land, where they stayed for several months in each year. After the wet season, in about May or June, they returned in their proas on the south-east winds, sometimes taking aborigines as part of their crew. This contact ended (being prohibited by law) in 1907, but Japanese pearlers continued to visit the shores up to the recent war.

Such intensive contact over a long period made a strong impression on the aborigines; this can be observed to-day in certain elements of the religious life and dogma, in secular ceremonies and songs, in mortuary rites and songs, in mythology and sacred songs, in trade, in fighting, and among material objects. And some alien 177 strain is observable in their physical make-up. In spite of this, however, they retain the fundamental basis of the aboriginal culture.

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[2] A detailed study of north-eastern Arnhem Land religious beliefs and dogma will be published later.

[3] L. Warner, *A Black Civilization*, 1937.

[4] They may be conveniently termed the 'Wu:lamba Confederacy. *Vide* also T. Webb, "Tribal Organization in Eastern Arnhem Land," *Oceania*, Vol. III, No. 4, p. 410.

[5] *Vide* A. Capell, "Languages of Arnhem Land, North Australia," *Oceania*, Vol. XII, No. 4, and Vol. XIII, No. 1. The collective dialects of this language group can, for convenience, be called *'Mi:waitʃ 'mata*.

172 [6] The date of their first contact is a matter of speculation, but is possibly much earlier than has hitherto been stated. A comparatively large collection of pottery shards, recovered from Port Bradshaw, not far distant from Yirrkalla, to be discussed later, may enable an approximate date to be fixed for the establishment of the Macassan settlements, remains of which are still known to the natives.

Since wood-carving of the type to be described here is not normally found in 177 other parts of Australia, it is probable that the design and manufacture were introduced at some early date from Indonesia. Native informants themselves state 532 definitely that these are of indigenous inspiration; and since most of the human figures represented in Groups 1, 2 and 3 are so intimately connected with the mythology and song-life, and since even the most sacred Ancestral Beings are carved and used in ritual, their statement is difficult to refute. On the other hand, figures of Groups 4, 5 and 6 are more or less definitely associated with alien contact, as are their songs and ceremonies. It is therefore a matter of hypothesis whether the figures of sacred intent were sponsored by the Macassan and '*Baijini*-inspired '*wurɔmu* and dancing objects.

Their Manufacture.

All carvings, secular or sacred, are made by initiated men, working in a special 532 camp. When the figures are required, at the advent of seasonal ceremonies, a craftsman employs at least two men to cut and trim the required posts. When these have been cut to size, and the bark removed, the artist begins to chip skilfully with a 412 knife or "shovel-nosed" blade,[7] until it takes the shape he requires. He works on this for several days, carving in the details and scraping it smooth with a knife blade, rough stone or piece of shark's skin "sand" paper.[8] It is essential that the body should be smooth, since upon its surface the sacred totemic or clan designs are painted.

This done, he smears the whole figure with red ochre as groundwork for the 532 design, and also to signify ritually that it represents a spirit being in human form. 778 But at this stage, the actual figure has no distinct personality—it is simply a piece of wood shaped like a human being. It is after the painting of the pattern upon its body, face and legs that it becomes imbued with personality, and reaches the status of a sacred being: it is then a symbol of some particular Ancestral Being immortalized in song, mythology and ritual.

The totemic painting is the most important part of its whole manufacture, 532 requiring hours of patient attention, the colours being mixed and ground on stones, and applied with a thin human-hair, bamboo-grass-root or pandanus-cone hair brush. When the figure is ready, it goes to a sacred storehouse to await the ritual showing.

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[7] The iron bladed "shovel-nosed" spear is common to this region. Iron was introduced by Indonesian visitors, but never in any great quantity, so that stone axes, adzes and knives were freely used until recent years. 177

[8] This is mounted on a piece of wood, and used in much the same way as emery paper.

either for good or ill. Thus there are found few natural leaders 157
among these people, a man's individuality being submerged in the 182
life of his horde or tribe. This same fact, coupled with the [614]
extreme isolation in which this race has for centuries lived, has
also served to stultify progress.

Only by a man of exceptionally forceful character could 178
reforms be instituted, and life has consequently gone on
practically unchanged for countless generations.

Toward those whose friendship has been proved these 577
aborigines show a splendid spirit of loyalty. Those who treat
them in a fair and friendly fashion will receive fair dealing and
devoted friendship in return.

Arts and Crafts

The weapons and utensils used throughout this area 411
correspond to the usual aboriginal type, but include a number of
local variations. Little use is made of any weapon other than the
spear, though clubs of several types are used to a limited extent,
as also are boomerangs.

There are many varieties of wooden spears, barbed and
unbarbed, some of which have the head and the haft fashioned out
of a single piece of hardwood in a very remarkable way. Flaked [438]
stone spear-heads are much used, particularly for fighting, and
these heads are traded over wide distances.

The use of iron, particularly for spear-heads and cutting 177
implements, has been known for many decades, this material 411
being obtained in limited quantities from the old traders from 439
Macassar. Only boomerangs of a heavy type are used, and these
are by no means common. The light, return boomerang is
unknown, as is also the shield.

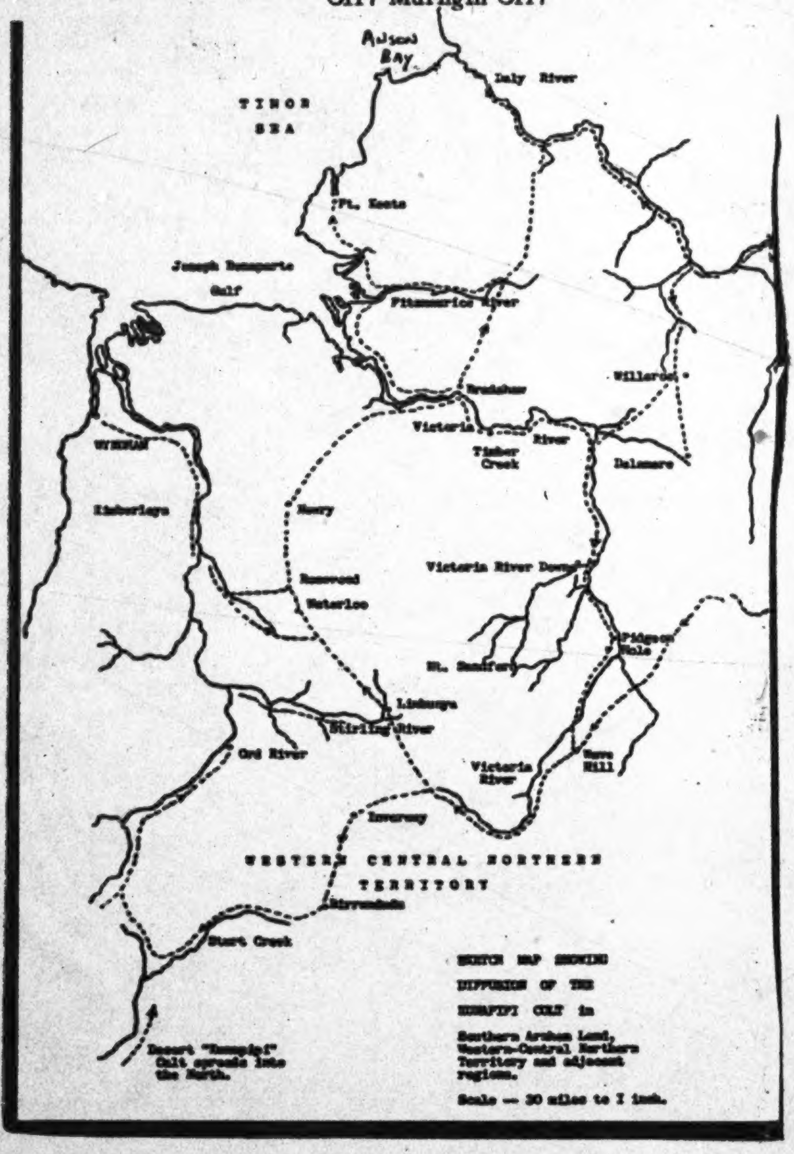
Many types of "dilly-bag" are made, some of which are of 415
such fine texture as to retain water. Others are highly decorated [285]
with feathers or fur woven in during manufacture. The material
used in most cases is the split leaf of the pandanus palm. Other [286]
bags are made of string knotted very neatly and evenly in an
open mesh. Fish nets are also constructed in the same way.

Excellent string is manufactured from bark fibre, grass, fur, 283
and human hair, and is used for a wide variety of purposes. Much
of it designed for ceremonial purposes is decorated with feathers
interwoven during spinning. Strong rope is made of bark fibre
or grass, and used in the harpooning of turtle, dugong, or
porpoise, and for the mooring of canoes.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951

OI17 Murngin OI17

102
131
133
487
●177
773


Anson Bay
Daly River
TIMOR SEA
Pt. Keats
Joseph Bonaparte Gulf
Fitzmaurice River
Bradshaw
Willeroo
Victoria River
Timber Creek
Delamere
WYNDHAM
Kimberleys
Newry
Rosewood
Waterloo
Victoria River Downs
Pidgeon Hole
Mt. Sanford
Limbunya
Stirling River
Ord River
Wave Hill
Victoria River
Inverway
WESTERN CENTRAL NORTHERN TERRITORY
Birrundudu
Sturt Creek
Desert "Kunapipi" Cult spreads into the North.

SKETCH MAP SHOWING DIFFUSION OF THE KUNAPIPI CULT in Southern Arnhem Land, Western-Central Northern Territory and adjacent regions.

Scale — 30 miles to I inch.

[Front End Map (A)]

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951

OI17 Murngin OI17

102
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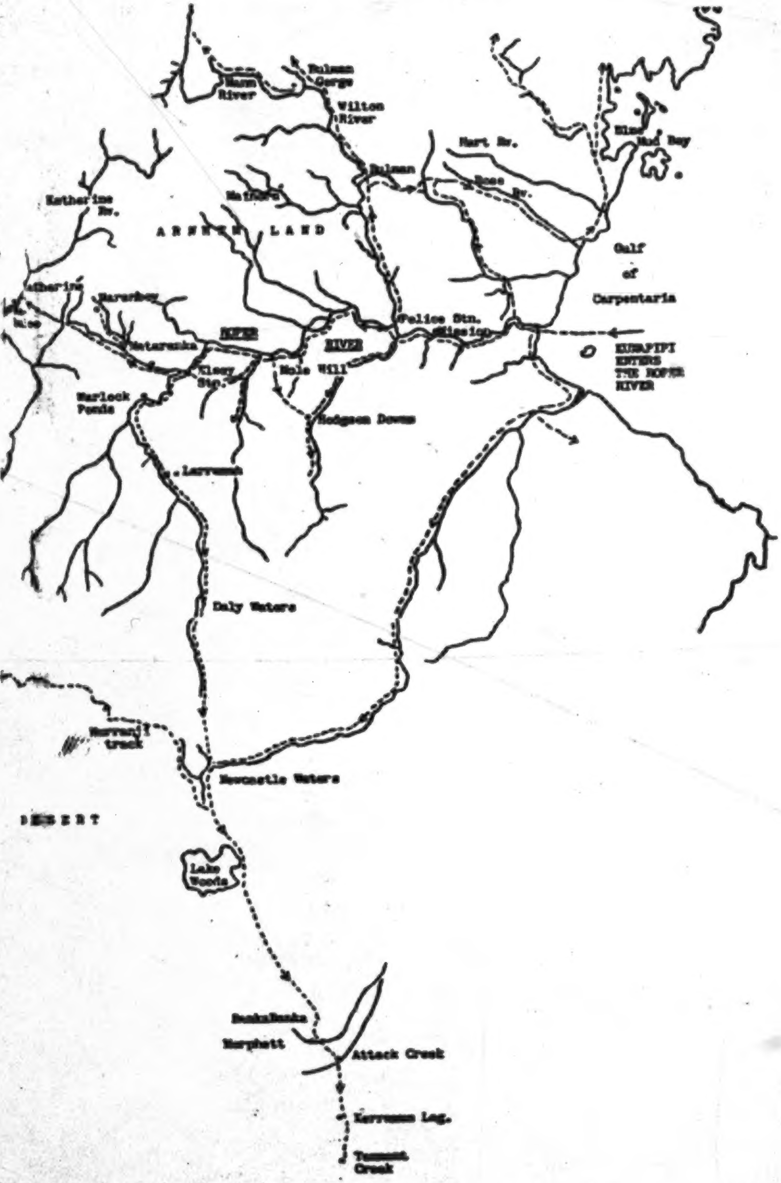
Bulman Gorge
Mann River
Wilton River
Hart Rv.
Blue Mud Bay
Bulman
Rose Rv.
Mainoru
Katherine Rv.
ARNHEM LAND
Gulf of Carpentaria
Katherine
Maranboy
Mataranka
ROPER
RIVER
Police Stn.
Mission
KUNAPIPI ENTERS THE ROPER RIVER
Elsey Stn.
Mole Hill
Warlock Ponds
Hodgson Downs
Larrimah
Daly Waters
Murranji track
Newcastle Waters
DESERT
Lake Woods
Banka Banka
Morphett
Attack Creek
Kurrenman Lag.
Tennant Creek

[Front End Map (B)]

796 it went to his Dreaming or spirit home to wait for the return of the
[775] animating spirit after the death and final burial of the individual.

Further, because of the original life-giving power of the "Mother",
[789] the ritual which included many dances referring to natural species, was believed to ensure the normal cycle of the seasons. This, however, did not occur directly as though the effect of increase rites, for the ritual was not regarded as such; but just as, and while, men per-
[774] formed their ritual in the "Mother Place" to ensure their own births and rebirths, so the "shades" of natural species performed their own increase rites in the spirit-world.

The details on which this brief analysis was based suggested that
[177] the Kunapipi ritual as described by Professor Warner as part of the Wawilak cycle and as having come from the south through the Rainbarngo (Rembaranga) tribe (p. 452), was a most important cultural element in Arnhem Land, the "pure" form of which must be sought along the line of the "southern" rivers such as the Roper, Katherine and Victoria.

In 1946, I worked for a short period amongst the tribes on the
177 Roper and Katherine and also visited north-east Arnhem Land, and
773 in 1947 and 1948 worked amongst the Mangarai and Alawa on the
796 Roper, and the Djauan and southern Rembaranga in southern
[114] Arnhem Land. While at Yirrkalla near Cape Arnhem in the north-east corner of the region I saw the ceremonial ground with the Nanggoru and Kanala where a Kunapipi ritual had been held some weeks earlier, and obtained information which showed that it had there coalesced with the Wauwalak (or Wawilak) myth, the very "hut", in which the two sisters and the baby were swallowed by *Muit* (Yurlunggur or Julunggul) the snake, being an important feature in the ritual. Moreover, the tradition, as given to me, was that Moit, that is the Wauwalak ritual, spreading south was met somewhere about the Rose River—Nungubuyu tribal country—by the Kunapipi ritual. For the people there, being afraid of his swallowing habits, killed him, and made their own *mumuna*, Mother Dreaming. The result is the present Kunapipi, with the Yermalindji—the Mother's yam stick, and at the same time the Rainbow Snake's symbol—and the Anggoru, the Mother's earth womb.

It was quite clear then that by 1946 the Kunapipi ritual had
[114] reached Arnhem Bay, and had done so since early 1929, for Professor Warner wrote (p. 452) that it was not found in any of the clans around Arnhem and Buckingham Bays, or on the islands of the north-east though large numbers of the men from these districts went south to take part in ritual with the clans of the same general linguistic group who did possess it. Further, I was told in 1946 at Elcho Island that a local man, Kumu, had brought the Kunapipi in about 1929 to Elcho and other islands from Caledon Bay where he saw it.

It seems then that the Gunabibi (Kunapipi) as Professor Warner 177
saw it after coming through the Rainbarngo and being amalgamated
with the Wauwalak, did not necessarily diffuse east to Melville and 773
Arnhem Bays, though the Wauwalak myth may have done so. It is 796
more likely that it spread there up the coast from the Rose River
country; ultimately the "distributing" tribe was the same, the
Rembaranga (Rainbarngo) and the fusion with the Wauwalak on the
upper Goyder may have occurred before the Kunapipi reached Blue
Mud Bay.

In 1946, while at Roper River Mission, I was given a detailed myth
of the movement of the Mumuna (or Kunapipi group) and the ritual
(with no trace of the Wauwalak myth) from Blue Mud Bay south
along the coast to the Roper River, which was crossed about thirty
miles from its mouth, and shortly after, a Wadiri-Anyula man gave [115]
me an account of the journey of *Gilyeri-gilyeri mara-abana*, the
Travelling Woman, from the Roper, near the junction of the
Limmen, and of the spread of the ritual, through the Alawa and on
and on to Lake Woods and Newcastle Waters. Here the ritualists
linked up with the route of diffusion from the Lower Victoria River
through the Mudbara tribe and by Battle Creek.

This, incidentally, completed the circle of the Kunapipi route, for a study of the rituals and myths and traditions show that it also spread from the Victoria River east through the Wadman, Yangman and Mangarai territory and thence north to the Rembaranga, and on to Blue Mud Bay, and thence, as we have seen, south to the lower Roper, and so on to Newcastle Waters.

At the present time, too, some of the Kudjika songs of the Kuna- [533]
pipi of the Roper River side, which I heard at the Elsey, are on their
way south-west through Warlock Ponds and then eventually to Wave
Hill, west of Newcastle Waters, and on even to Wyndham, that is, to
East Kimberley.

The doctrines are still very real to the initiated Mangarai, whom 773
I have come to know during the past three years. We talk about the
myth or ritual; we mention the sacred key and pass words referring 796
to the "Mother", the bullroarer, the Yalmanindji, the "river" and 171
"billabong" (womb) on the ritual ground, or we repeat the words of
the chants: but let anyone pass by even thirty yards away and out of [123]
earshot—the subject is dropped immediately, until that person has
really gone by. And how interesting it is to hear on the Roper
almost the same ritual words as obtain at Yirrkalla, and then to hear
them again from Djauan and southern Rembaranga and others on
the Mainoru, south of Bulman Gorge, and 100 miles west again not
far from the Waterhouse! When I arrived at the latter place in
September, 1948, a Kunapipi ritual had been completed only a few
days before. I saw the headman and others who participated. There,
too, was the Kanalina and the Anggorna (Nanggoru) with the

786
sexual intercourse with the obvious representatives of the "Mother" 796
enable her to fulfil her important function. [789]

Thus, here as in the Ancient East, ritual sex-intercourse is a sacra-
mental act in the cult of the "Great Mother", on which her potency 773
and the survival of man and nature depend. In both regions we are 786
in the presence of a "Mystery Religion". The precious guarded
secret is only revealed to the initiated, the twice born, and that 796
secret, that "mystery", is the continuity of life. Life, however, is no 789
mere visible or external phenomenon. In all its forms it has a
spiritual counterpart, its "shade". The Cult Mother is more than the
Big Woman of the mythological period; she is eternal in the earth,
and present and active in her "shade" form in every Kunapipi. The
Great Snake, too, Muit or Yermalindji, is present in his symbols at
the ceremony, teaching the "reborn" through the traditional words
and ritual behaviour of the elders, speaking through them even as
the prophet and teacher is the voice of his God. The ritual or "wood"
shade, the spirit double of the initiand enters the bullroarer symbol
of the Mother and with it remains in her "earth womb" until it goes
to the spirit home. While the actors perform their rites to ensure the
birth and rebirth of mankind and the "increase" of the Great
Mother and the Great Snake as manifested in the rains and the con-
sequent fertility of the earth, the spirit-womb of the Mother is made
potent; in addition, as they represent in mime the behaviour of [825]
animals, reptiles, birds and insects, the "shades" of these creatures [774]
perform the increase ceremonies of their own kind in their own ritual
places in the spirit-sphere. Finally, the women who have co-operated
in the Kunapipi with their "outside" calls, responses, songs and
dance (like the Bundami or Awalambi), and who then take part in
the ritual intercourse with men from the Mother Place, become [775]
bearers of the latters' ritual or Kunapipi "shades"; at least, such is
the doctrine in the Roper River region.

So life is assured to man and nature for it is eternal in the spirit
world, in the Great Mother who brings forth and whose impregnat-
ing symbol is the Great Snake, the iridescent rainbow which never [821]
fails to join the sky to the earth.

Such is the appeal of the cult. Its function in the social and
economic life of a food-gathering people in a tropical environment 114
can be studied, and indeed is obvious and logical. A most valuable 794
attempt to analyse the North-East Arnhem Land cults from this
point of view has already been made by Professor W. L. Warner in 796
A Black Civilization. But why should such a Fertility Goddess cult 177
arise in Arnhem Land and the Victoria River region, and not also in
the northern part of the Kimberley Division or in Cape York
Peninsula, where the tropical seasons and conditions of living for a
parasitic food-gathering people are similar? The answer probably
lies in the differences in external contacts. Here it is sufficient to say

114 that the several centuries of contact with Macassan and pre-Macassan traders, fishers and sojourners which marked the Arnhem Land
177 coasts from the Victoria River right round to Groote Eylandt, were
794 not experienced in the other two tropical regions. It is, therefore, possible that pre-Islamic religious influence was exerted on the
796 Aborigines, perhaps through individuals who accompanied the Macassans and others to the islands to the north, for in some of these, the earlier Hindu cults were cherished in spite of the proselytizing nature of Islam. Moreover, the Mother cult-heroine is said in
[773] myths to have come through the sea, whether she be Kunapipi of the Victoria and the Roper, or the Mother of the Iwaidja and other tribes of Western Arnhem Land.*

Mana and Other Problems

The above is the general principle and question raised by the
114 Kunapipi cult. Mr. Berndt's book, however, in giving a description
778 and analysis of this cult, raises many other important matters. For example, there is the problem of power or "grace" in religion, indicated in north-east Arnhem Land by the term *dal*. It is the anthropological problem of *mana* over again. It operates through the Mother
[776] or through Ancestral Beings who in their "spirit parts" are present in the ritual. But does the ritual automatically release that power, setting it in motion for the welfare of man and nature? Or is it manifested through life and increase by the will of the Mother or other Being in response to the ritual? Obviously, according to the doctrine, it cannot operate apart from such Being or Beings. Indeed, is it not that Being in activity or rather in relation to man and nature —an activity and presence realized in ritual? Problems associated with the Doctrine of the Trinity are not peculiar to Christianity.

114 Mr. Berndt agrees with Professor Warner that the Aborigines are not ignorant of physiological paternity. The ritual supports this con-
842 tention. True, these natives hold also the doctrine of pre-existence,
796 of spirit-children who enter the mothers for incarnation. But, what this entry does is to provide the "shade", the eternal spirit-part, and so give life to that which is already in the womb, as the result of sexual intercourse. Intercourse does not merely prepare the way for the entry of the child-spirit and for its subsequent birth; this is the usual view. In addition, it is followed by the formation of the foetus

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* The point of entry of the Fertility Mother cult of north-western Arnhem Land is definitely placed by the Aborigines and their song cycles in the Coburg Peninsula. The Kunapipi cult, however, seems to be distinct from this, and while I incline to find its point of distribution in the lower Victoria region, the final decision must wait for more research in the field and further analysis of the material already in hand. Mr. Berndt's maps in this volume refer only to the recent and present movement of Kunapipi songs, the movement west from the Roper being a return along a song route to a western point of distribution, and not necessarily diffusion from a point of entry at the mouth of the Roper.

which then has to be quickened. The coastal Arnhem Landers have 114
had centuries of contact, and it may be that the usually accepted
Aboriginal doctrine of conception has been modified here. In any 842
case, granting the premises, the form in which they hold it is emi- 796
nently logical.

Amongst the many other interesting points raised by the author 114
is the vital significance of dreams, particularly for ritual and its inter-
pretation. One of Mr. Berndt's important contributions to the 123
anthropology of northern Arnhem Land is his systematic recording 787
of dreams—a sign of the confidence put in him by the natives, and
also a sign of the objectivity with which they regard dreams.

One last point: Mr. Berndt lays stress on the importance of the 114
ritual rôle played by women in this region. He is correct in doing so. 562
Though they are not on the "Mother Place", yet they are nearby 796
playing their part, a part which stems from the Dreamtime, when the
sacred ritual was theirs; and how else could it be, for life and birth is
through the womb? A cult of the Great Mother would have no
foundation apart from the women through whom her children must
be born. Women here have their sacred aspect and sacred rôle.

The Author and the Field

Mr. R. M. Berndt was well equipped for doing research into the 114
religion of Arnhem Land. After study in the Department of Anthro-
pology, University of Sydney, he with his wife (Catherine H. Berndt), 121
also an Anthropologist, did four years of field research amongst
Aborigines in both tribal and detribalized conditions. This included
about eighteen months on the south-west of Arnhem Land and on the
border of the Kimberley Division of Western Australia, where he
was introduced to the cult. In 1946 when the Australian National [122]
Research Council was able to make a further grant to these workers,
we selected the north-eastern corner of Arnhem Land as the main
field. Research there would be complementary to what Dr. Warner
had done eighteen years before; in addition it was an area subject
to the spread of native customs and rites from both the west and the
south, and was also likely to show some cultural effects arising from
long contact with Macassans or others who visited the region to [797]
engage in marine industry. Finally, although a Mission had been
operating at Yirrkalla for nearly ten years and an Air Force base had [177]
been established there during the war, causing some modification of
native life, in particular, lessening the degree of nomadism, yet in
spite of this, the fundamental drives and beliefs had not been
affected. Men in the prime of life as well as the old men still belonged
to the "old order". It was, therefore, still possible to study the native
religion in its cultural and social setting as a functioning institution.
Fortunately, I was able to assure myself of this during a visit and
inquiries in the region in 1946.

PREFACE

The main purpose of this work is to indicate some fundamental features of an Australian Aboriginal religious cult, the Kunapipi, in 121 one particular area. North-eastern Arnhem Land has been selected, not because it presents a more exotic background or more spec- 794 tacular ceremonies, but because the cult as seen here is fairly well defined, and because its religious concepts are important and significant to the people concerned. In this region there are several fairly well integrated religious cults, having a common theme and fundamental intent. Most of them, however, have complex local associations, whereas the Kunapipi ceremonies, which have been introduced into north-east Arnhem Land, belong to a configuration which is still widely diffused throughout the Northern Territory.

The plan is to examine the cult as seen in this one region, to consider its relative importance in adjacent areas, and so prepare the 121 way for a more intensive analysis of it in the central-western part of the Northern Territory. 177 Although introduced, the Kunapipi has become closely associated with more truly north-east Arnhem Land mythology, in particular, the Wauwalak, which is used to explain it; but the Wauwalak mythology itself was at some time diffused into north-eastern Arnhem Land, apparently from the same direction as this much later ritual.

The Kunapipi songs of Yirrkalla (in north-east Arnhem Land) have been derived from those commonly in use further south. [533] By examining relevant songs and mythology of adjacent areas, it is possible to trace the movement and diffusion of this cult from one group to another, and to discuss (for instance) the source of the Yirrkalla Kunapipi. This is not really difficult, for the Kunapipi (in all the regions mentioned in this work) possesses the common theme of a Great Mother, expressed as either a single or a dual personality, [776] her power being extended to her daughters, the Wauwalak, Ka'lerika'lering or Mungamunga. She is said to be responsible for the constant fertility of human beings and other natural species, and the [842] continuing sequence of the seasons, as well as for the general similarity of her ritual, emblems and songs. In addition, certain "key" words, which are sacred, are used widely to designate ceremonies, [192] objects and sacred beings. 771

What does this cult mean to its postulants? Why does it exist? 794 What do the people themselves believe that they are receiving from 796 it? Its basic intent seems to express the latent or conscious desires of 121

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the guise of an Ancestral Being) is the proselytizer, the carrier of the 121
germ of a religious idea, which is adopted by, and modified to suit, 771
the social group in which he finds himself. Whether he brought with 776
him the ingredients of that religion from his own "home", or whether 794
it took shape in consequence of his contact with the alien people, is a 773
matter for conjecture.

The diffusion of Aboriginal religious cults, such as the Kunapipi, 177
also presents some interesting features. A certain amount of more or
less "pure" evangelization has occurred in this respect; individual 794
cult leaders, of both historic and contemporary society, have been 797
interested in furthering the activities of the cult. But in their successful and unsuccessful attempts to introduce their particular beliefs into other groups, they take only the basis of their cult life, and do not as a rule attempt to superimpose their own cultural ideas and organization. In north-eastern Arnhem Land, for example, the Kunapipi, recognized by natives themselves as an introduced theme, has been [182]
fairly well integrated with existing social organization, religious life, and secular beliefs; even its mythology has been altered to meet the demands of local ethics, while the alien songs are interpreted in the light of indigenous criteria. Nevertheless, the basic ideology and construction of the Kunapipi cult remain: and it is this aspect which really concerns the proselytizer. The same process may be observed [171]
in other regions, such as western Arnhem Land, the Daly River-Port Keats area, and west-central Northern Territory.

* * * *

A word should be said concerning the presentation of Kunapipi 128
Song Cycles (that is, in Chapters VII, VIII, X, and XI). Their value lies in their substantiation of the cult's doctrine, explaining its outward expression in ritual and in the use of ceremonial emblems and objects. Such traditional songs ensure that the original intent of the cult is not lost or radically misinterpreted. To-day, however, misinterpretation is possible as a result of conflicting loyalties arising from the contact of Aboriginal with European culture. In order to restrict ourselves to the literal interpretation of these songs, it has been found necessary to present them with an interlinear translation, a general rendering, and a brief commentary based on native interpretation: this method makes available the maximum amount of
data. The phonetic script used conforms to that of the International [104]
Phonetic Association,[2] amended for use in Australia by Dr. A. Capell.[3] [126]

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2. G. Noel-Armfield, *General Phonetics*, 1931, pp. 21–23. *Vide* R. and C. Berndt, "A Preliminary Report of Field-Work in the Ooldea Region, Western South Australia", *Oceania Bound Reprint*, Sydney, 1945, pp. 262–264, or *Oceania*, Vol. XV, No. 1, pp. 50–52.
3. A. Capell, *Methods and Materials for Recording Australian Languages*, Sydney, 1945 (reprinted from *Oceania*, Vol. XVI, No. 2, pp. 144–176). Since the complete phonetic script was not available for rendering native words in this volume, some equivalents in ordinary English lettering have been used.

CHAPTER I

THE CULTURAL PATTERN OF NORTH-EASTERN ARNHEM LAND SOCIETY

a. The Geographical Background:

The main centre with which we shall be dealing here is Yirrkalla, 131
in the far north-eastern corner of the Arnhem Land Aboriginal
Reserve. The surrounding area is thickly wooded, with jungles and 133
mangrove swamps, fresh water streams and tidal rivers, long 137
beaches broken by sheer cliffs, and occasional islands fairly close to
the shore.

Yirrkalla itself takes its name from a fresh water creek that flows [103]
into the surf beside a long white curving beach. This creek drains a
wide area of lagoon and swamp, its source far back in the hilly
inland. Wide grass flats, easily inundated during the monsoonal [132]
rains, and dense jungles, lie in the back country not too far from the
coast line. At Yirrkalla the Methodist Overseas Mission established 797
a station some eleven years ago: and now a Mission house on a low
cliff dominates the beach, where native huts, mostly of cast-off [342]
European timber and tin, are arranged in rows. Beyond the Mission [177]
house, on a smaller beach, are other huts; and a church, store-house,
dispensary and garden complete the settlement.

This Mission station is the centre for natives whose traditional 131
home camps are at Blue Mud Bay, Trial and Caledon Bays and Port
Bradshaw to the south, facing the Gulf of Carpentaria, while visitors 797
come from Groote Eylandt, Woodah Island and Rose River. The Yirrkalla local groups belong mainly to Cape Arnhem, Bremer Island, Melville Bay, and the English Company Islands, as well as to Arnhem Bay: but natives from the Wessel and Elcho Islands, Milingimbi in the Crocodile Islands, and from the mainland to the
west, do visit this region. Yirrkalla is thus a strategic base for [122]
anthropologists and missionaries who desire to contact members of
various groups of a more or less similar cultural and linguistic background.

Geographically speaking, the Yirrkalla groups are comparatively isolated, for to-day only the Mission lugger calls at this depôt, with occasional visits by other Europeans who come by boat and 'plane. Yirrkalla is approximately 500 sea-miles east of Darwin, 130 miles

131 from the Church Missionary Society settlement at Groote Eylandt,
797 and 90 miles from the nearest Methodist Mission at Elcho Island.
Apart from the Mission stations of Roper River, Oenpelli, Goulburn Island, Milingimbi, Elcho Island, Yirrkalla and Groote Eylandt, which fringe the great Reserve, there is no other European settlement, except the new base subsidized by the Northern Territory Native Affairs Branch at Ambu Kambu on Groote Eylandt.

136 The whole region is rich in indigenous foods and resources, particularly along the coast. The sea abounds in dugong, turtle, fish,
262 crayfish, shellfish, oysters, and crabs: inland, on the plains and in the jungles, there are wildfowl, emu, wallaby, kangaroo, and smaller animals, fruit, nuts, vegetables, berries, and a large variety of other bush foods, with quantities of fresh-water fish and crocodiles in the streams and rivers; and at times buffalo which have wandered eastwards from the Buffalo Plains west of Oenpelli. So plentiful is the food that, even in bad seasons, the quality may diminish, but rarely the quantity.

b Social Organization:

114 Before proceeding to our main study, it is necessary to outline briefly the structure of north-eastern Arnhem Land society. The work
184 of Professor Lloyd Warner is the most reliable in this respect, while the Rev. T. T. Webb and Dr. Donald Thomson have written on the
121 subject.[1] The reader will find sufficient detail in these for our present
177 purpose. But it should be borne in mind that the organization of Yirrkalla society, although basically similar to that of Milingimbi, is in many respects decidedly different. Dr. Warner viewed aboriginal social life through the eyes of Milingimbi informants, influenced by cultural trends from Cape Stewart and the inland, while the present writer views the same position from the Yirrkalla point of view, uninfluenced to any marked degree from the west, but responding to contact from aboriginal groups to the south and south-west (this is particularly apparent in our study of the Kunapipi cult).

These people of eastern Arnhem Land, from Cape Stewart to
101 Blue Mud Bay, had a general term for themselves—the Wulamba group of clans, forming a tribe with a more or less common cultural background: natives outside this region, such as those at Groote Eylandt, called them the "Balamumu" confederacy. Balamumu may
614 be broadly translated as "those of the sea", that is, coastal people.
197 The varying dialects (termed *mata*, "tongue") of these clans (*mala*)
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[1] L. Warner, *A Black Civilization*, New York and London, 1937; T. T. Webb, Tribal Organization in Eastern Arnhem Land, *Oceania*, Vol. III, No. 4, pp. 406-411; A. P. Elkin, Marriage and Descent in East Arnhem Land, *Oceania*, Vol. III, No. 4, pp. 412-416; D. Thomson, *Interim General Report of Preliminary Expedition to Arnhem Land, Northern Territory of Australia*, 1935-36, Department of Interior, Canberra, 1936, pp. 31-34.

614 Arnhem Land, social organization: the division of society into two
616 groups (that is, moieties) was, with the kinship structure, the traditional norm. But within recent years the sub-section system has
been introduced from the south and south-west, coming up the coast
[177] through Rose River and Blue Mud Bay. In the Milingimbi region it seems to have been introduced at an earlier date, through contact with the inland tribes, particularly the Reinbaranga. At Yirrkalla, however, the sub-sections are not yet completely co-ordinated with the kinship terminology, and among the older people are not in constant use. Certain sub-section terms are however mentioned from time to time in this work, in reference to Ancestral Beings; they will not be discussed in this context, and reference should be made to the work of L. Warner, T. T. Webb, A. P. Elkin and R. Berndt.[3]

c The Religious Quality of Yirrkalla Social Life:

Yirrkalla society, like most other Australian Aboriginal communi-
222 ties, whether of desert, hill or coast, must forage for its food, the
796 abundance of which depends on the particular environment. On the
789 north coast and rivers of Arnhem Land, food of many varieties is
771 available in great quantities. In spite of this, however, its constant supply is said to depend on the rhythm of the seasons, upon the mythical characters of the Eternal Dreaming Period, and on the performance of associated ritual and ceremony. In order to ensure a constant supply of food, in the form of natural species generally, these aborigines rely on the great ceremonial cycles of *djunggawon*, *kunapipi*, *ngu:rlmak*, and the *dua* and *jiritja nara* cycles which are usual in this region. These rituals, associated with the principal Ancestral Beings such as Djanggawul, Wauwalak, Laintjung, Banaitja and Baijini, are the basis of indigenous religion. But they are not concerned merely with the provision of food. Their purpose
[842] is, primarily, to ensure the continuation of the human species; the increase of all other animals, birds, fish, vegetable matter, and so on, is only an adjunct to the main theme.

This religion then is a dominant quality in Yirrkalla life, and is
771 reflected in all its institutions and conventional forms of behaviour.
794 It concerns itself with the fructification of all living things, and in that category human beings themselves are considered the most
789 important. As, however, the Kunapipi cult is especially concerned with their rhythmic sequence of birth and rebirth, it is crystallized in a definite concept of a Fertility Mother. Moreover, the cult is concerned with the coming and going of the seasons, the appearance and disappearance of vegetable and plant matter, and the propaga-

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[3] *Vide* L. Warner, *op. cit.* 1937, pp. 116–124, and his Morphology and Functions of the Australian Murngin Type of Kinship, *American Anthropologist*, n.s. 33, 2, 184; T. T. Webb, *op. cit.* pp. 406–408; A. P. Elkin, *op. cit.* pp. 412–416; R. Berndt, *Love Songs of Arnhem Land*, Chap. I.

however, the people to whom Laintjung had given his sacred designs 616
and *rangga* were sorry for what they had done, and made the "likeness" 773
of Banaitja in paperbark bound on a framework of cane. The
influence of Laintjung and Banaitja, in spite of their importance, did [171]
not cover such a wide area as that of some other Ancestral Beings;
and the aborigines account for this by explaining that Banaitja
"was killed at an early age, before he had the opportunity of travelling
widely throughout this region".

Most of the great religious myths of this region are associated
with the *dua* moiety, the more conservative section; it is the *jiritja* [177]
which embraces new and "alien" ideas and activities. From time to 773
time, fully-initiated *dua* and *jiritja* men are shown the "high" 616
rangga, and through the years they become increasingly familiar
with the complex ritual. This admission to sacred knowledge, however, 561
is not thought comparable to an initiation or age-grading 796
ceremony: it is more in the nature of a revelation through which
they become acquainted with the inner substance of religious thought
and expression. The *dua* Wauwalak myth, on the other hand, is of
general importance, and is associated with the three sacred "age-grading"
ceremonies of this north-eastern region. There is also much
sacred ritual not concerned with age-grading. Both *dua* and *jiritja*
men take part in this, and it incorporates some purely *jiritja* songs [533]
belonging to separate cycles.

The two Wauwalak sisters are associated with the concept of 773
fertility, owing mainly to their connection with birth, after-birth
blood, and menstruation. The latter receives a great deal of attention 796
in Yirrkalla thought. Aboriginal women are all potential [841]
Wauwalaks; and a great deal of their behaviour, particularly at
puberty, and when menstruation ceases at pregnancy, is said to be
based on that of the Two Sisters. The Wauwalak myth is most
important to these north-eastern Arnhem Landers, and they make
frequent references to it. It has, as mentioned, far more general
application than have the Djanggawul and Laintjung cycles; and the
three separate ceremonies which concern it here are each of a different
nature. The commonest is the *djunggawon*, used primarily for
initiation; ideally, it extends over a couple of months, and includes, [881]
in addition to circumcision and camp dancing, a certain amount of
ritual which is not fully revealed, as in the case of the Djanggawul.
The second of these three ceremonies is the *kunapipi*, which will be
dealt with in the following chapters. The third is the *ngu:rlmak*
ceremony, performed to-day only at rare intervals. It is considered
to be far more important than either the *djunggawon* or the *kunapipi*,
but less so than the Djanggawul and Laintjung *dua* and *jiritja nara*
rituals.

There are also a number of subsidiary ceremonies, related in some
degree to these two main cycles, but not by any means so outstanding.

Before turning to our main study, we may mention briefly the
778 presence of material emblems and symbols in religious life. This
532 north-eastern culture, far more than those to the south and southwest,
pays great attention to the outward expression of religious and esoteric ideology, both as a guide to ritual behaviour, and as a means of impressing certain concepts on the minds of neophytes. In addition to copies of the *rangga* introduced by Djanggawul, Laintjung and others, there are many beautifully made *rangga*[4] relating to various totemic objects and natural species, as well as to human organs and ancestral people, used constantly as "high" *rangga* in the *nara* rituals. They are often stylized, made from various hard woods, cane or paperbark, bound with jungle-fibre twine, painted with clan totemic designs, and ornamented with colourful feathered strings. There are also human figures, carved from blocks of wood, and decorated in the same way. In the Wauwalak ceremonies many other sacred, *maraiin*, objects are used: the *uwar* drum of the *ngu:rlmak*, the *jelmalandji* "posts" and forked stick *djepalmandji* of the *kunapipi*, the *julunggul* trumpets and dancing posts of the *djunggawon*. There are also bark paintings, with sacred totemic clan designs, used on the ceremonial ground, or with copies of chest drawings.

All these, for the aborigine, are concrete expressions of his
771 religious concepts; they prepare his mind to accept the essence of
778 sacred dogma, and to grasp its significance. As symbols, they keep
alive for him the reality of traditional belief. Faith is essential for
182 social cohesion, giving meaning and sanction to behaviour patterns
177 and institutions; its presence has been far more apparent in Aboriginal
societies throughout Australia than in contemporary European groups. The majority of these aborigines, before contact, believed implicitly in the essential goodness of their own way of life; all was explained, each member of the community had a definite place in the scheme of things, and the future was well determined. To-day, how-
177 ever, the native on the fringe of European culture finds that social
182 conditions are changing, his accepted beliefs have been sharply
questioned, and an alien ideology is being more intensively enforced.
771 His ceremonies are performed less frequently, his great song cycles sung less fervently, and his sacred objects and paraphernalia are gradually losing their meaning and function. The cohesive and integrating qualities of his religion and mythology are weakened, and finally destroyed. The balance of his own cultural structure, with all its apparent weaknesses and inconsistencies, is upset by intensive external pressure and "civilizing" influences. No longer is the pattern of his life determined by a traditional code. Instead, he discovers himself to be relying more and more constantly on alien beliefs and ideas; but owing to the suddenness of the change, and his inability

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[4] *Vide* A. P. Elkin, R. and C. Berndt, *Art in Arnhem Land*, F. W. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1950, illustrated.

to adjust himself immediately to the new ways and actions, these fail to satisfy his needs, and so he becomes frustrated and unhappy. 177 182

We are, however, principally concerned here with the aborigines' adjustment to their own indigenous religion; and within this field we have selected one particular cult, the Kunapipi, which has wide implications and seems to be diffused over the northern part of the Northern Territory. 771

171 Territory,[4] artists depict human beings, as totemites, flowing from
794 the uterus of the Mother into the round "ring place" (or ceremonial
ground) for the performance of sacred rites. The "ring place" is
773 itself the uterus of the Mother. To-day, in the really important sacred
776 ceremonies, a special ring place is used for the performance of these
rituals. As the neophytes leave the camp for the sacred ground, they
[778] themselves are said to become increasingly sacred, and to enter the
Mother; they go into her uterus, the ring place, as happened in the
beginning. When the ritual is completed the Mother "lets them out";
they emerge from the ring place, and pass once more into ordinary
life. These ring places vary in shape from place to place, but all symbolize the Mother's uterus. The sacred ceremonies associated with
this Fertility Woman are called in pidgin English "Big Sunday",
[778] inferring a sacred atmosphere from the European connotation of the
word Sunday, while the term refers also to "sandy place", the soft
ground upon which the sacred dancing is performed. The appellation
"Big Sunday", in some regions, may also be derived from the term
"Centre" place, which refers to the sacred ceremonial ground.

All Kunapipi ritual, irrespective of region, has thus a common
796 theme. We find in it the return to the Mother's uterus, and the
794 eventual emergence, when the postulants come out from their sacred
ritual refreshed, and as "new" men (that is, it is like a "rebirth"):
771 this symbolic enactment of birth brings with it a renewal of ideals,
energy and faith. Fertility and the supplying of food, sexual pleasure
831 and satisfaction, solidarity within the group, and an undividing
faith in the divine truth of the cult—all these elements are present.
Food and sex, fundamental in human life, and consequently in
religion, owe their continuance, it is said, to the Eternal Mother.
It is not surprising that people living in such close proximity to
nature, with few artificial distractions, should recognise the fundamental importance of female fertility, and see in it a central theme of
religion.

* * * *

171 In north-eastern Arnhem Land, the Kunapipi cult is not yet
deeply entrenched, since it has been introduced within comparatively
794 recent times. Its earliest infiltration took place through the Reinbaranga (sometimes termed Rembranga, and localized in south-
177 western Arnhem Land) and Burera tribes and so into Milingimbi,
where Professor L. Warner witnessed some of its rituals twenty years
ago. From this centre it spread westwards towards Goulburn
Islands and Oenpelli,[5] and eastwards to Elcho Island and Arnhem
Bay. But it does not seem to have gripped, at that time, the imagina-

[4] *Vide* R. and C. Berndt, *op. cit. Oceania*, Vol. XVII, No. 1, Plates I to III; and R. and C. Berndt, Aboriginal Art in Central-Western Northern Territory, *Meanjin*, Spring, 1950, pp. 183–188, ten plates.

[5] R. and C. Berndt, *Sexual Behaviour in Western Arnhem Land*, Chapter IV, Section IX.

tion of the people further east, around Yirrkalla, Cape Arnhem and 171
Caledon Bay.

It was not until perhaps fifteen years ago that the cult gradually 794
spread northwards from Rose River, where its custodians were the 177
Nunggubоiju group who had obtained it from the Roper River
people, particularly from the Mangarei-Ma:ra-Alawa tribes. The
Lultma'rangu (*dua* moiety), Dalwongu and Mararbu (*jiritja* moiety)
linguistic groups were the first to come within its influence; they
mixed with people from Rose River to perform Kunapipi ceremonies
around Caledon and Blue Mud Bays, and occasional Kunapipi
rituals were held round about Yirrkalla.

But although these people did perform the Kunapipi at relevant 171
seasons, this did not take the place of indigenous religious belief and 177
practice. The great ceremonies of the *dua* and *jiritja* moiety *nara* were
still the most important; and the *djunggawon* and *ngu:rlmak* rituals, 616
associated with the two Wauwalak Sisters and the Rock Pythons, 794
retained their importance in the minds of the north-eastern people. 796
Kunapipi in this area was subsidiary, whereas in most of the other
areas mentioned above her rituals held a paramount position.

The introduced Kunapipi cult brought with it all its attendant 177
ritual and ceremonial activity, but apparently its original mythology
(see Chapters IX and X) became merged with that of the Wauwalak.[6] 184
It was, in consequence, more readily accepted by the local people, 773
for the Wauwalak myth-cycle embraces much of the indigenous
religion. Thus, instead of becoming just another introduced ceremony, 794
the Kunapipi became a cult associated with a series of cults, having 796
roots in indigenous mythology. The Wauwalak mythology had much
in common with that of the southern Kunapipi. Both possessed the
same concept of fertility. The Wauwalak sisters became indirectly
the dual Mothers, continually replenishing the earth with human [776]
beings and with the natural species. Even the Rainbow Snake was
presnt, i c the form of the Rock Pythons, who finally swallowed the
Sisters. Fundamentally, too, the arrangement of the sacred dancing
ground, and much of the incidental ceremony (when the special
Kunapipi objects are not used) are similar to those of the *djunggawon*
and *ngu:rlmak* rituals.

One aspect of the Kunapipi is slightly at variance with local 773
indigenous belief. In north-eastern Arnhem Land the Fertility 776
Mothers are the sisters of Djanggawul, Pildjiwuraroiju and Miralaitj. 184
The Wauwalak, although associated with the idea of fertility, are not
concerned with human or animal creation: they are said to be the 794
daughters of the elder Djanggawul sister, removed from her uterus
by her Brother. According to conventional Kunapipi mythology,

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[6] The Wauwalak mythology itself was introduced much earlier into north-eastern Arnhem Land, its original source being found in the mythology of the Kunapipi: *vide* Chapters IX and X.

For example, the Kunapipi held at Yirrkalla is essentially similar to 184
that held at Birrundudu (towards the Western Australian border in
central-western Northern Territory). There is the spasmodic use of 794
bullroarers; the sacred ground itself is the uterus of the Mother; a 796
sacred well (*nanggaru*) is dug on the dancing ground; a crescent-
shaped trench (*kanala*) is made later; *jelmalandji* "posts" are
erected, immense structures symbolizing the Pythons; there is the
exchange of wives and gifts, with ceremonial intercourse; and the
forked posts, called the *djepalmandji*, are used towards the termina-
tion of the rituals. These are features of all Kunapipi, Kalwadi and
Kadjari ceremonies.

A word may be said too of the songs that are used in the Yirrkalla- 184
Rose River Kunapipi Cycle.[8] These are mostly of the short conven- 533
tional type common throughout most of Aboriginal Australia,[9] and
their words serve as "key" patterns suggesting and inferring ideas, 794
rather than providing detailed description. This form of song 796
structure is, like the Kunapipi, alien to north-eastern Arnhem Land,
where usually songs are very lengthy, description is detailed and
repetitious, and separate cycles contain several hundreds of songs
(or verses). Secular and magico-religious *tjarada* love songs, which
are often associated incidentally with the sacred Kunapipi (for they
are sometimes connected with the Mungamunga), have also found
their way up through Rose River to north-east Arnhem Land, and [177]
have retained their own song-structure against much local opposi-
tion from semi-indigenous forms.[10]

The major theme in all Kunapipi ritual is the natural cycle of 794
reproduction and fertility. Fertility, as expressed in reproduction,
seasonal fluctuation, periods of plenty and scarcity, is symbolized 796
in the ceremonies associated with animals, birds and plants, their 831
mating, copulating and bearing offspring in their proper seasons.
The essential factor of mating and copulating, as a step towards 776
reproduction, is crystallized in ceremonial copulation on the sacred
ground. And ever present, "eternally" watchful and omnipotent, is the Great Mother, the essence of fecundity, in whose divine power rests the strength to animate and increase both human beings and the natural species. The performance of rituals attracts her interest, and brings into motion her protecting influence, which ensures a continuation of the world that her neophytes know, and the unbroken sequence of the seasons upon which they depend for their livelihood.

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[8] *Vide* Chapters VII and VIII of this work.

[9] R. Berndt, A Wonguri-Mandjikai Song Cycle of the Moon Bone, *Oceania*, Vol. XIX, No. 1, pp. 16-50.

[10] *Vide* R. Berndt, *Love Songs of Arnhem Land*. In this work a Rose River Love Song Cycle and the *tjarada* are detailed and discussed.

Wauwalak sheltered, and into which the Julunggul came, the *murlk* 773
symbolizes the uterus of the Mother (the Wauwalak or Djanggawul). 778
Old aborigines say: "You know, when the Julunggul went into the 796
hut, we mean that a penis is entering a woman's vagina, and this hut 796
is a uterus too: that is why we have it on the sacred ground, for it 346
reminds us that everything must come from the Mother's uterus.
That is how we came in the Dreaming; and people still continue to
come in that way, don't they? And why do we have that Julunggul?
Well, don't we have to have a penis to open up and inseminate the
woman, so that she can give birth to children? And when the
Julunggul swallows the Wauwalak, that is like a penis being swallowed by a vagina, only we put it the other way around. Now, when [789]
we hold our big rituals, we do the very same things, because we want
the seasons to come, and things to grow, and people to be born:
that is the real meaning of what we do".

The Kunapipi rituals have been described in some detail by Dr. 114
Warner (*op. cit.* pp. 290–311), and the reader is referred to this for
comparisons. We will mention only various features found in the 796
Yirrkalla region, indicating their relation to the Wauwalak mythology, and interpreting (from native explanations) the actions of the neophytes. It is beyond the scope of this work to record minute details of each stage of the ceremony, for this would entail description of dancing and many irrelevant actions, individual interpretations, and the whole interaction of men and women in and away from the sacred ground. Some of the Kunapipi songs, used both on the sacred ground and in the main camp, are given in Chapters VII and VIII, and these reveal certain details not treated here.

* * * *

The Kunapipi is held usually in the dry season, when food is 796
plentiful; for during this ceremony people are reaping the benefits of
performances held in the previous year, and at the same time are
preparing for the coming wet season and the subsequent growth of
food. Ceremonies may extend over a period of two weeks to two
months, and in unusual cases as long as two years. But now, when [797]
the Mission frowns on the Kunapipi and its attendant rituals, it may
be brought to a close after a few days with the result that much of the [177]
intricate symbolism is omitted. The principal Kunapipi leader is
usually a man of the Li:alauwermiri or an affiliated linguistic group, [614]
or one whose totemic *rangga*, *marciin* objects, or song cycle are
associated with Muruwul sacred well and the Wauwalak. In the [616]
Yirrkalla region the Kunapipi leaders may have come from Rose
River, being members of groups which are in other respects culturally
alien, or from *dua* clans near Rose River who have obtained the
Kunapipi from further south.

the mound piled beside the *ba'uma*. When the Wauwalak actors 796
see the Snake, they act as if "they are shamed", here termed 881
g(w)o:ra'nganbinganbi. They are "shamed" because they have the
child, and their blood is running.[9]

When this dance is over, two *dua* men bring out a pole from the darkness of the bush beside the sacred ground, and hold it horizontally, waist-high from the ground, on the concave side of the *ba'uma*. Within the crescent trench lie the young boys, and on the opposite (the convex, though sometimes on the concave) side of the *ba'uma* the *jelmalandji* stand, held by two men. Then, to the ritual crying of all participants, the *jelmalandji* are pushed over so that they hit the pole and tumble to the ground. They are picked up, and pushed over again; this is repeated several times, until the feathered ornaments on top of the *jelmalandji* fall off. The Julunggul are falling over, after swallowing the Wauwalak.

Then the young boys are removed from the *ba'uma* and placed on
the mound beside it, while the *jelmalandji* are put in their place.
Fire-sticks are thrown into the *ba'uma*, to burn the grass and paper-
bark surrounding the central poles of the *jelmalandji*. At the same [785]
time men open their arm veins, sprinkling blood on one another and
into the trench; this is the blood of the Wauwalak, and blood itself [826]
symbolizes life. Rows of dancing men come down the sacred ground
and along the shallow trench, to and around the *ba'uma*, pushing the
mound into the trench and gradually filling the hole, until the earth
from dancing feet covers the *jelmalandji*, and the ground is flattened
"so that no one will see that trench".

This completes the main section of the Kunapipi: the sequence of these rituals may be changed according to the inclination of the totemic leaders, or some may be omitted.

* * * *

This is followed by two concluding features: the ceremonial 796
exchange of wives, and the return of the young boys into secular 837
camp life. The latter always takes place at Yirrkalla; but local
aborigines say that the former is less common, and it does not seem [881]
to be well integrated with indigenous social behaviour. Mission [797]
pressure has been brought to bear, in recent years, on the perform-
ance of the Kunapipi, and especially on ceremonial intercourse; but [177]
it is still practised at Milingimbi and Rose River, and away from white
supervision on the settlements.

In other parts of the Territory where Kunapipi holds sway, and where "Big Sunday" is an integral part of native religious life, ceremonial copulation brings these rituals to a climax. It represents a

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[9] The word "shame" signifies "shyness", the normal feeling a menstruating
woman feels towards a man who observes her blood. The European cultural [841]
connotation is lacking in this pidgin translation of the native term.

773 tence and immutability of the "eternal" Beings, a religious philosophy
796 has been developed among the mature "thinkers" of the group.
796 This finds its outlet in the mental exercise of meditation, interpretation,
789 and explanation, but is nevertheless restricted by the deep
794 faith that is a living part of all its manifestations. Within the limitation
of defined premises, a certain degree of flexibility is apparent;
philosophic concepts have not remained static, nor ideology stagnant.
Throughout the centuries of religious development, alien ideas
[177] have been considered and discussed, even when they were unorthodox,
and apparently opposed to indigenous theology. They have been
accepted or discarded; but all have, in this way, served to illuminate
and extend the basic principles which serve to explain to the aborigines
man's place in his environment, and his inter-relationship with
the "Divine" Beings who are possessed of the power of animation
and are the seat of knowledge.

796 Several interesting points are raised in our description of Kunapipi
ritual.

In all Kunapipi ceremonies, throughout the whole region mentioned
in Chapter II, basic words referring to the sacred objects,
ceremonies, and so on, are very much the same; for instance,
[184] *nanggaru*, *kanala*, *jelmalandji*, *djamala*, *gunagu*, and *djepalmandji*.
These terms serve as a connecting link, for their meanings do not
change drastically from one area to another, even when, as at Yirrkalla,
the Kunapipi ritual itself has been superimposed on a relatively
indigenous theme. The dominating theory behind the Kunapipi
has preserved, more or less intact, its original intent.

Another outstanding aspect is the important rôle undertaken by
562 women throughout the performance of the Kunapipi ceremonies.
796 At no time do they feel themselves secluded from purely male
activity, while at intervals they take an active part. They know that
the rituals are principally concerned with peculiarly feminine functions,
and that men are carrying out the more strenuous features of
ceremonial life. "These rituals," said one informant, "are just like a
man copulating with a woman, he does all the hard working so that
the woman can carry out the really important business of childbirth."
This may be a one-sided attitude, but it does adequately
express local native reasoning in this matter. The question of
whether women are profane, as opposed to the aura of sacredness
pervading a male participant at such a ceremony, does not enter into
Yirrkalla thinking. Even when ritually tabu because of afterbirth or
[841] menstruation blood (as in the case of the Wauwalak at the sacred
Muruwul billabong), a woman is regarded as sacred, for her blood
and her other activities themselves are sacred, and are focal points
in the religious doctrine. And all sacred ceremony, these aborigines
[773] say, was inspired by women. "In the beginning men had nothing, and
women possessed all the ritual; so men stole this from the women
..."—(Djanggawul and Wauwalak mythology).

CHAPTER VI

KUNAPIPI DREAMS

Kunapipi ritual and ideology, like all other aspects of native life 121 and thought, find expression through the medium of dreams. The study of these requires not only personal aequaintance with the individuals whose dreams are recorded, but also sound knowledge of their cultural and traditional background. Their behaviour patterns must be compared with those of other representatives of the group; all social factors likely to contribute towards a particular dream should be analysed, and the individual's personality and psychological approach taken into consideration. In addition, the natives' own theory and interpretations of dreams must be considered.

For several months, at Yirrkalla, the dreams of a number of adult 124 males were recorded daily. During the initial period of field-work, it was necessary to have approximately thirty male informants, each chosen for some specific reason; one was a headman of a certain [115] linguistic group, another an artist, a wood-carver, a song-man, a leader of the Djanggawul or of the Kunapipi rituals, and so on. With such a group readily available it was convenient to record their dreams each morning while studying their social background. At the [123] same time an intimacy grew up between the field-worker and the informants, so that mental reservations were reduced to a minimum. Detailed case-histories of each individual were compiled over the period of work, and the sequence of events within the social group was observed in relation to their dreams; these events were apparently modified or accentuated according to a man's peculiar background and associations. What had begun as a tentative experiment developed into an important aspect of study, which revealed the natives' [177] psychological adjustment to their society under the impact of Misson and European contact. However, it was found necessary after a certain period to restrict the time spent on this work, since it had shown a tendency to dominate, and even in part to exclude, other aspects of equal if not greater importance.

It was however of great value to have this opportunity of studying 124 hundreds of dreams, recorded in sequence, of a number of these 159 aborigines, and to observe the wide range of subjects concerned, 787 together with the themes which reflected each man's particular

[828] sleep feeling hungry, and dreamt about this Kunapipi. That is, he went back to his "Dreaming" for consolation.

159 787 881 796 Most of this dream too consists of description of ritual, but not in conventional sequence. Some interesting aspects appear, which amplify our previous discussion of the Kunapipi. There is complete identification of the *jelmalandji* with the Julunggul Snake. But Gumuk re-interpreted the *kanala* and *nanggaru* in commenting on his dream. He said that the *nanggaru* was actually the "Mother's" (that is, the Wauwalak's) uterus, while the *kanala* was the channel ("river") or passage of the vagina, "through which people passed in the Dreaming" (that is, during the period when the Wauwalak walked the earth). He was possibly interpolating here his own theory as to the meaning of these symbols, for usually the *kanala* is the uterus and the *nanggaru* the place of the big Snake. This individual interpretation, however, is extremely valuable; for it is far more logical to classify the *nanggaru*, which is round or oval, as a uterus, and the *kanala*, narrow and resembling a channel, as a vagina. Gumuk's reference to people passing through the *kanala* in the "Dreaming period", is connected with the idea that the Mother "let out" people from her womb, so that they could perform sacred ritual, returning when this was completed. This aspect is not apparent in Yirrkalla mythology; Gumuk possibly assimilated it from Rose River, where Kunapipi ritual has a stronger hold of the people's imagination and sacred activity, and where it is more likely to be influenced by external features. [177]

[552] The calling of the sacred alternate names for the Lightning dancing, the bullroarer and its string, the *kanala* and *nanggaru*, as well as for the *jelmalandji*, has not been mentioned before in our discussion. The concept is found, however, in the calling of the *bukali* (*dua*) or *bukalilji* (*jiritja*), or "power" names of invocation, and some of these are widely distributed. The use of the term *djamala*, in reference to the "Lightning whipping" dance, is equivalent to the *djamala mareiin* mentioned in Chapter IV, which consists of the throwing of firesticks; both refer to the Snake's sending lightning so that a tree was split and the Wauwalak were frightened. The climax of Gumuk's dream is the breaking of the bullroarer's string while it is being twirled: it flies through the air and splits a tree, but is itself undamaged. This symbolizes Julunggul's act of sending lightning to split a tree, for the bullroarer "is like the Snake" (that is, part of its spirit), and its whirling "like lightning". It is the natural culmination of the *djamala* dancing around the *nanggaru* and *kanala*.

159 787 796 [574]

The final dream also belongs to Gumuk.[5]

"I have been dreaming about Kunapipi, and two 'Dreaming' men

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[5] Reference: Book 12, Series A, Dec. 27th, 1946.

CHAPTER XII

FINALE

The foregoing chapters have indicated something of the funda-
771 mental doctrine of the Kunapipi cult, based as it is on the essential
794 human and animal drives of food and sex, and including such
important aspects as the maintenance of food supplies, and procreation, necessary for the continuation of both the human and natural species. In this respect the Kunapipi religious cult is not unlike many others that express the hopes and desires of simple and sophisticated peoples alike. And even when its principal intent is materialistic, it does not exclude spiritual conceptions: in fact, these latter are of major importance.

Here, in Aboriginal Australia, among contemporary aborigines, exists this vivid and vital cult, expressing their own religious view of life: it is correlated with their traditional background and social institutions, and so intimately concerns their spiritual personality structure. Moreover, it is well adapted to their particular environment, since the great Spirit Beings themselves are associated with the country the aborigines know and love; and each man, woman and child has a part in this religious concept, for he (or she) is akin to the Mother. That is to say, their religion is a response to their particular material and spiritual requirements, in such a way that it is a very real and important aspect of each person's life. There is no sharp demarcation between secular and sacred life, because the one is so closely interwoven with the other. This religious concept, too, is not confined to men; it is equally important and significant to women. Each sex has its own particular sphere of activity and interest.

The religion of an indigenous native group, which has had little or no alien contact, is a living faith, something quite inseparable from the pattern of everyday life and thought.

177 With the introduction of alien ideas, through intensive European
contact, this fundamental faith is shattered to a greater or lesser
771 degree, according to the intensity and type of that contact. In most
794 parts of Arnhem Land where Missions have been established, there
is the impact of Christian teaching, of ideals which are not intimately
797 concerned with the life of the native people, which often contrast sharply with indigenous traditional themes, and which belong to a strange and different cultural background. The repercussions of this impact, therefore, are frequently severe.

Christianity, with its attendant ritual and belief, is apparently 177
inseparable, in this context, from Western European culture, and for 771
that reason it assumes a dominant and militant aspect. The indigen- 794
ous culture, however, lacking the other's wide range of material 797
objects and technology, and the subtleties of fanatic evangelization,
seems as a rule powerless to resist.

Missionaries on the north coast of Arnhem Land and elsewhere
in this region have made little attempt to understand the underlying 177
motives of native ideology and their religious view of life. The 794
majority (with a couple of exceptions) contend that Aboriginal 797
religion is not a religion in the strict sense of the word, for to most of them religion is translatable only in terms of Christianity. With this conventional bias, they see only certain superficial aspects of such cults as the Kunapipi,[1] which they have not attempted to link with fundamental belief. They have not appreciated the importance of the Fertility Mother and the Rainbow Snake, nor the stress on certain erotic features. Ceremonial copulation is viewed as debauchery and unbridled lust, while women are said to live in virtual terror of the use which is made of them at such a time. In our study of the Kunapipi cult, as it normally functions, we have observed a different picture.

It is not our purpose here, however, to defend Aboriginal religious belief and activity, nor to discuss the relevant virtues of each religion. We need mention only that in the region under discussion the impact of Christianity, as presented by the Missions, has produced some change in the indigenous religion. Moreover, change of this kind has been brought about not only through the active interference of the Church, but through the gradual and indirect introduction of European secular concepts. The Mission is not only an agency for the Christian religion. It is the vanguard too of all the more materialistic elements which attend European cultural life; for Christianity means, to most, Europeanization. The balanced life and economy of the aborigines has been irrevocably upset, with resulting disorganization. The Kunapipi too has suffered, and is rarely seen in its entirety to-day, although its basic rituals and concepts have as yet (in Arnhem Land for example) remained relatively unaltered. Its adherents have, however, been driven to secrecy; and its ceremonies are for the most part carried out in the bush, away from Mission Stations and settlements. Ceremonial copulation has been frowned upon by the Missions, and in some cases this element of the Kunapipi is either omitted altogether or carried out surreptitiously.

On the other hand, the Missions' almost unanimous opposition to

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1. The question of sexual behaviour, in particular, seems to arouse strong reactions, when the indigenous culture offers manifestations that differ widely from accepted European conventions. It is apparently simpler in this case to condemn, than to study and investigate without prejudice.

177
794 Kunapipi performances has served to strengthen native belief in its efficacy; but this tendency will last only as long as do the members
797 of "the older generation".

By the driving underground, so to speak, of the Kunapipi, its
[831] sexual element has become considerably accentuated. In some cases, ritual copulation has lost a certain proportion of its sacred aura and serves as an excuse for promiscuity. This aspect is particularly apparent in contact areas where detribalization has taken place, and intensive cultural disintegration has resulted.

177 For example, on war-time Army Settlements during 1944–46 the performance of the Kunapipi (or "Big Sunday", as it was called) was
794 forbidden by Civil and Army authorities alike, on the grounds that
778 the big religious ceremonies entailed interruption of normal work. As a result of this prohibition very few of the sacred ceremonies were
648 carried out, although a number were performed surreptitiously some distance from the Settlements, and were consequently of brief duration. One development of this external control was the accentuation of sexual promiscuity through the medium of the "Big Sunday", and the indiscriminate use of sacred tabus for the materialistic ends of a minority. In the latter case, food, clothing, and other goods were sometimes declared sacred, and could in this way be taken over by the person or the group pronouncing the tabu.

Whole areas of the settlement would, unknown to the womenfolk, be declared ritually sacred to men: latrines, washing-sheds, camps, roads and so on were pronounced tabu-ed to women. A woman inadvertently entering the demarcated area would be threatened with
[837] punishment, which she could avert through payment of goods or sexual favours: usually, of course, she preferred to "pay" with coitus.

This practice reached such proportions that Settlement officers endeavoured strongly to oppose it, and cited it as an additional reason for prohibiting the Kunapipi ceremonies; nevertheless the habit persisted, and seems to have aroused interest and enjoyment among both men and women. On the Daly River, west of Darwin, a rather similar practice has become institutionalized, in attempts to reinforce a religious life which is fast disappearing because of the disrupting effects of local European contact over a comparatively long period. Other examples, too, could be brought forward to confirm this particular distortion of "Big Sunday" religion.

But these features are abnormal; they have been brought about by circumstances beyond the control of the natives themselves, and represent merely one unpleasant result of uncontrolled or badly planned contact between two widely differing cultures. They would not normally appear, for they are not a part of indigenous religious
177 life.

794 We might well ask what is the future of a cult like the Kunapipi.

Can it continue to exist in its present form, in a situation of culture contact? Example has shown that under abnormal circumstances, when the inroads of an alien culture have attacked the social structure of the indigenous society, its survival odds are relatively low. 177 794 Collapse of Aboriginal community life brings disillusionment, loss of faith in accepted doctrines, and consequent maladjustment. That is [182] to say, as contact becomes more intensive, a cult of the Kunapipi variety will become correspondingly corrupted, and its principal intent will be overshadowed by the distortion of certain aspects which will inevitably serve to destroy it completely.

On the other hand, a cult of this type, which so adequately fulfils an aboriginal's religious requirements within his own cultural environment, is so much a part of his material and psychological make-up, and expresses the basic urges and necessities of his life, should surely find some place in his changing society, among widening interests. This should ideally be the case if the aboriginal is to retain something of his individuality, and not become merely a stereotyped imitation of the European. But this ideal form of adaptation is not to be found in North Australia to-day, and there are no indications that it will be so in the future. Although the indigenous religious faiths still retain their full significance in some [178] areas, in others they are gradually changing, and their hold on the [771] people's life is weakening. In some regions they are merely a shadow of their former selves, distorted to meet the selfish aims of a few maladjusted and frustrated tribal remnants.

Still, however, in outlying camps where aboriginal life proceeds comparatively undisturbed (and there are few such areas to-day) the twirling bullroarer is heard, and the answering call of the women; there is rhythmic singing, and the stamping of dancing feet on the sacred ground echoes through the quietness of the Bush. People have come together to renew their faith, to refresh themselves spiritually, and to ensure that the continuity of the seasons is maintained, as well as the continuance of the life they know and appreciate. The pervading influence of the Great Mother is, to them, a reality.

APPENDIX I

171 In the main body of this work some mention has been made of
794 ceremonial copulation during the performance of the Kunapipi.
796 Our examples were taken principally from north-eastern and southern Arnhem Land, with reference to the Roper River region; and
831 for comparison with these the following data from western Arnhem Land are presented.

During our field work in the western Arnhem Land region, at the Goulburn Islands and Oenpelli, little reference was made to the Kunapipi ceremonies;[1] it was said that these were introduced by
●[177] Reinbaranga people from the south and south-east, in the direction of the Roper River, or that they came from the Milingimbi area to the east.

Recently, however, the writer's chief informant at South Goulburn
[115] Island, a Maung man named Small Ngolaman (or Nangolominj), who is incidentally one of the very few literate aborigines on the north coast of the Northern Territory, and who has been "keeping track" of certain problems in the region during our absence, writes that the Kunapipi is known to some of the mainland men who visit Goulburn Island. The Kunapipi, as we are already aware, is carried out in the vicinity of Oenpelli, and in the upper Liverpool River area, under the auspices of Reinbaranga or Milingimbi leaders, and is known (but not practised) at Goulburn Island.

Small Ngolaman's preliminary statement[2] reveals some very interesting features: for example, the use of one girl on the sacred ground needs more accompanying data, since it bears a striking similarity to the more western type, as carried out by the old Laraki:a tribe; this will however be dealt with later. Ngolaman's informant
[115] was a Maung man, named Inmindjur.

"Messengers are sent out, notifying the various groups that the
[203] Kunapipi is to be held. When the people come in to the ceremonial camp, the rituals begin. The Kunapipi headman chooses a young
794 girl, and takes her away from the main camp to the sacred ground. She is placed in a big bough shade or hut, recently built by the young
796 initiated men; she lies there on her back. Two holes are dug, one on
831 each side of her; a strong post is placed in each, and rammed

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1. *Vide* R. and C. Berndt, *Sexual Behaviour in Western Arnhem Land*, Chapter IV, Section IX.
2. *Correspondence* to R. Berndt, October 4th, 1948.

114 Since writing this book, the author and his wife have been able to spend a further period of anthropological research (1949-1950) in western Arnhem Land around Oenpelli, and in central-northern Arnhem Land about Milingimbi Island in the Crocodile Group.

At Oenpelli the complete series of Kunapipi rituals was seen twice through,
126 photographed, and descriptions recorded; to supplement this, a mass of data
was collected in relation to Kunapipi song cycles and mythology (mostly in
114 interlinear text). The Oenpelli rituals relating to this cult have been introduced
794 to this area within recent years, and were under the direction of ceremonial
headmen with Gunwinggu affinities, whose home territory lay further to the
south-east towards south-western Arnhem Land (the source of the Liverpool
and Wilton Rivers). The cult had been brought into north-central Arnhem
[177] Land from the south on the one hand, and from north-central Arnhem Land
via the source of the Liverpool on the other. The rituals witnessed by the author
were the first complete series ever performed at Oenpelli; a number of adult
Gunwinggu men (otherwise fully initiated) passed through them as "novices",
[881] being obliged to undertake all the customary and relevant obligations. The first
series was held about half-way through the monsoonal season, and the second
a little before the onset of the dry weather.

In the Milingimbi region full groups of songs relating to the Kunapipi were recorded, together with all relevant data.

The above will be discussed and presented in a future volume dealing with the regions concerned.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

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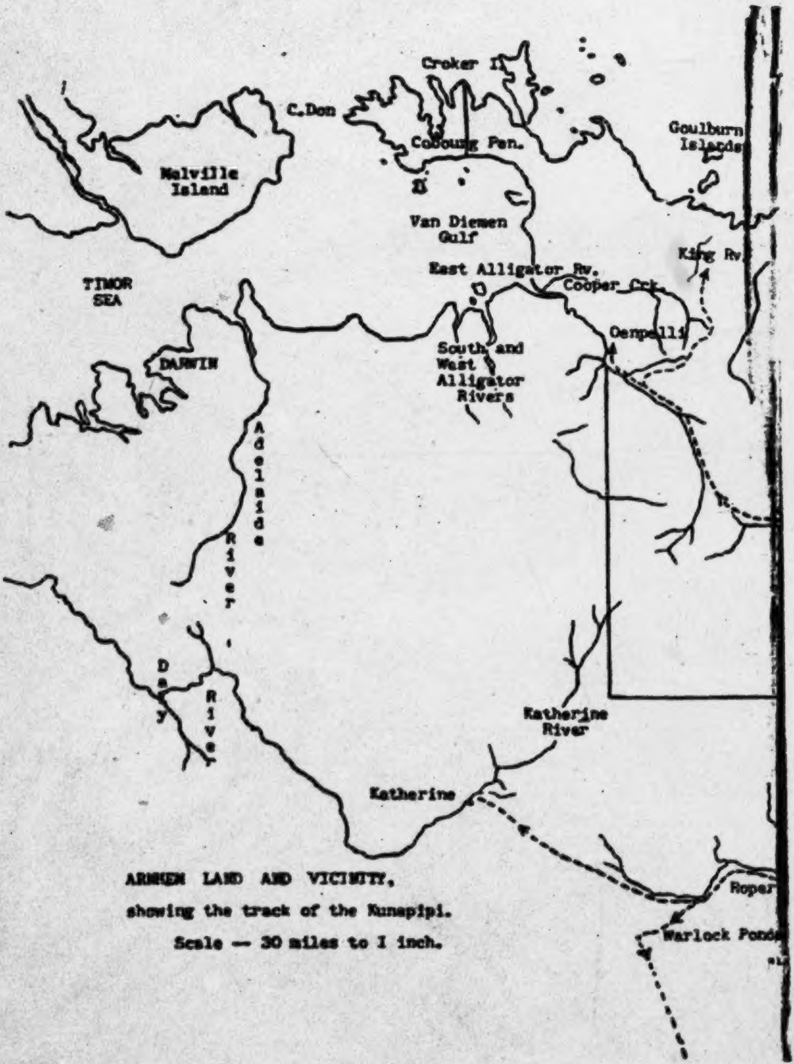
Croker I.
C.Don
Goulburn
Islands
Cobourg Pen.
Melville
Island
Van Diemen
Gulf
King Rv.
East Alligator Rv.
Cooper Crk.
TIMOR
SEA
Oenpelli
DARWIN
South and
West
Alligator
Rivers
Adelaide
River
Daly
River
Katherine
River
Katherine
Roper
Warlock Pond

ARNHEM LAND AND VICINITY,
showing the track of the Kunapipi.
Scale — 30 miles to I inch.

[Back End Map (A)]

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951

OI17 Murngin OI17

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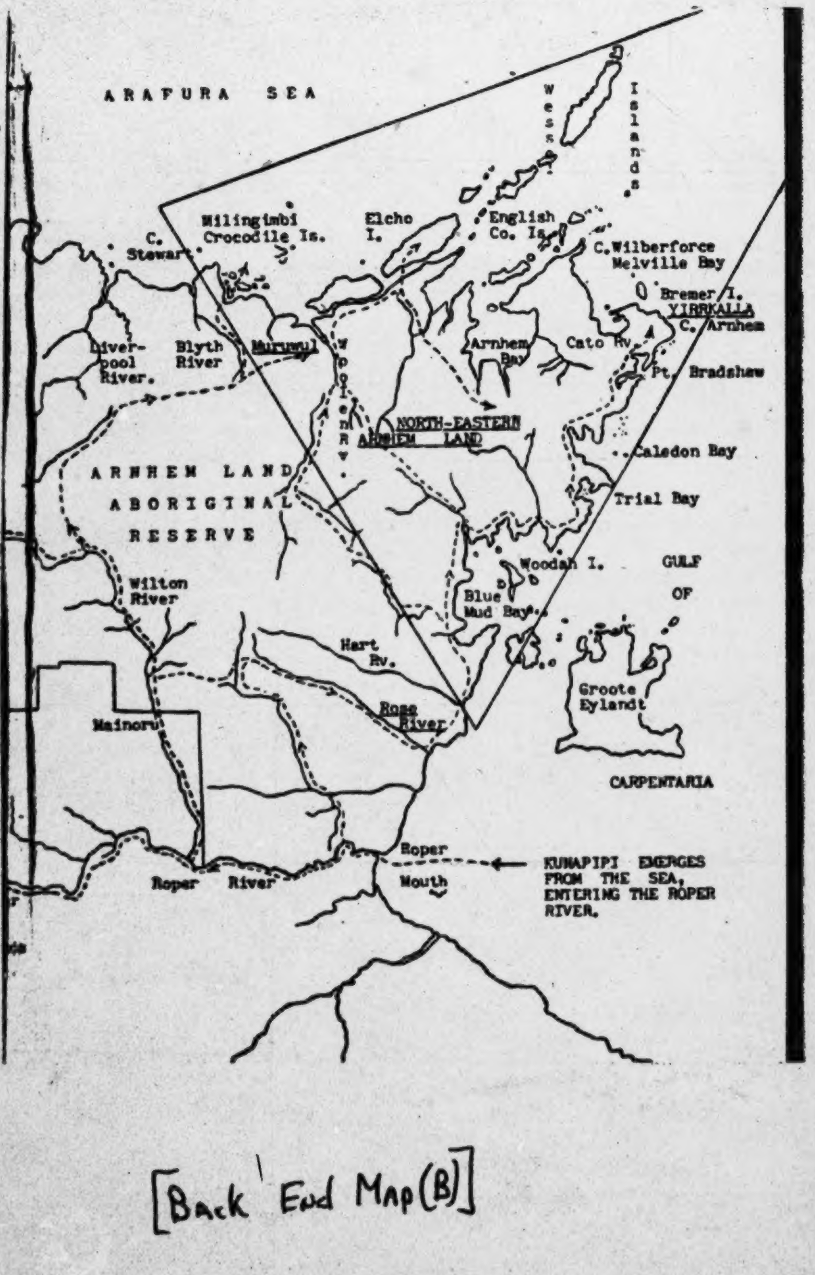
ARAFURA SEA
Wessel Islands
Milingimbi
Crocodile Is.
Elcho I.
English Co. Is.
C. Stewart
C. Wilberforce
Melville Bay
Bremer I.
YIRRKALLA
C. Arnhem
Liverpool River.
Blyth River
Muruwul
Woolen Rv.
Arnhem Bay
Cato Rv.
Pt. Bradshaw
NORTH-EASTERN ARNHEM LAND
Caledon Bay
ARNHEM LAND ABORIGINAL RESERVE
Trial Bay
Woodah I.
GULF OF
Blue Mud Bay
Wilton River
Hart Rv.
Rose River
Groote Eylandt
Mainoru
CARPENTARIA
Roper Mouth
Roper River
KUNAPIPI EMERGES FROM THE SEA, ENTERING THE ROPER RIVER.

[Back End Map (B)]

may serve to minimize the number and extent of such alterations 173 and deviation, as found in their mythology. On the other hand, especially on the north-eastern coast of Arnhem Land, these people have been subjected in varying degrees to the infiltration of new ideas.[1] Their society, or for that matter their culture, has not remained static through the ages, while they were experiencing [177] various forms of alien contact. Without elaborating on the subject here, however, it seems safe to say that, whatever the extent of past alien contact in Arnhem Land, the majority of these Aborigines appear to have retained, as far as we can tell, the fundamental elements of their traditional outlook. Even if the Djanggawul saga has been considerably altered from its original, we have now no means of discovering what that original was like. We must, then, be satisfied with what knowledgeable Aborigines tell us to-day, learning their interpretations, and the apparent intent of contemporary *nara* rituals.

The original theme of the Djanggawul was possibly similar in many points to its modern counterpart, for the basic theme of fertility is heavily emphasized, and constantly expressed in symbolism: and symbols to these people provide the material basis upon which they have elaborated their religious thought and ritual.

We shall return to this point in a later chapter. At present we are concerned with inconsistencies; and a possible explanation for these may be found in the fact that tradition, orally transmitted, is not static, but is inevitably dependent on individual variability.

The most obvious inconsistency arises from the statement, at 173 the beginning of the myth, that before the arrival of the Djanggawul in Arnhem Land there 'were only land and sky, animals and birds, foliage and trees . . . and beings of totemic origin.' The Djanggawul, we are told, were responsible for the creation of human beings as we know them to-day. Throughout the myth, however, mention is made of other people, as well as Spirits, with no indication of their having sprung from the Djanggawul. It seems then, that, in addition to totemic beings, there were others who came into contact with the Djanggawul. Aborigines say that before the Djanggawul came there were only 'bird people in the land'; the latter may be taken to mean 'totemic beings' of animal, bird, reptile, fish or vegetable origin. Again, although these natural species 173 were present, the Djanggawul are said to have 'made them *wongar*, 178 or 'dreaming'. 'Dreaming' is totemic in the sense of being specially

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[1] *Vide* R. and C. Berndt, *Arnhem Land—Its History and Its People*; and also R. and C. Berndt, 'Secular Figures of North-Eastern Arnhem Land,' *American Anthropologist*, 1949, Vol. 51, No. 2, pp. 213–22, with plates.

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954

OI17 Murngin OI17

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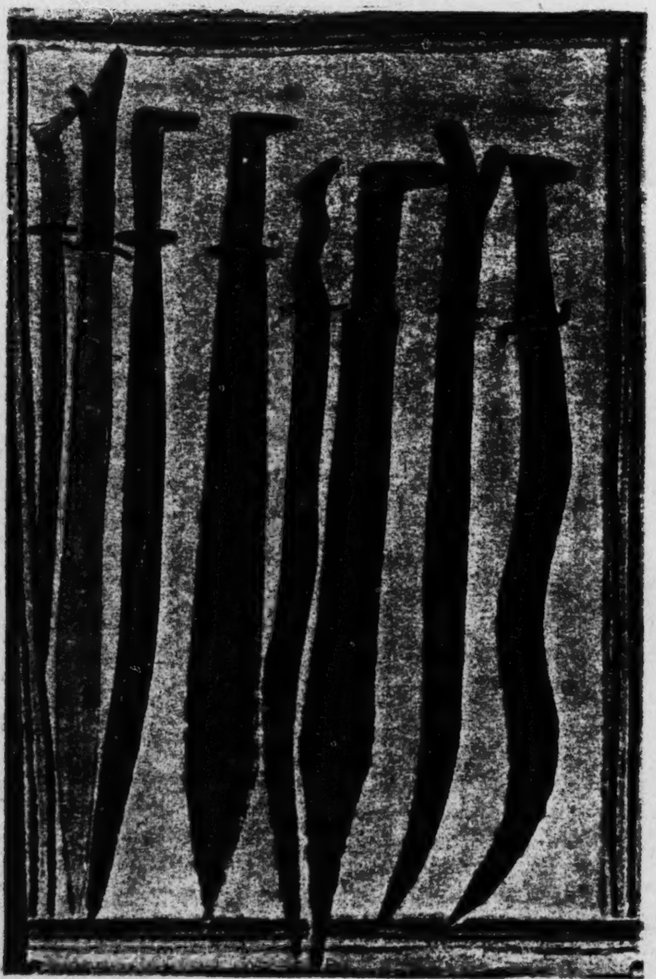

Plate 1: Drawing: Weapons used by Indonesians and later adopted by the Arnhem Land Aborigines. [in color]

[Facing title page A]

BACKGROUND

Once the term "Arnhem Land" was applied to the whole 131
region east of Daly River, including the area about Darwin and Katherine, Melville and Bathurst Islands, and the "Buffalo country";[8] but since the Aboriginal Reserve was established, the name has been restricted to this.

All through this region, except in parts of the interior, there 136
is no scarcity of food. In the rivers are fresh-water fish, goannas
and crocodiles, in the sea and coastal bays many varieties of fish, 262
shell-fish, turtle, dugong and (rarely) whales. At certain seasons the swamps and rivers, streams, waterholes and jungles, teem with wild fowl; eggs are plentiful, and (according to the time of the year) there is a choice of duck, goose, tern (or sea-gull), crocodile, turtle, emu and jungle fowl. Inland and along the coast there is an abundance of meat — kangaroo, wallaby, opossum, bandicoot, porcupine and edible reptiles. Moreover there are introduced water-buffalo, which abound in western Arnhem Land, and are seen today as far east as Yirrkalla, near Cape Arnhem.

Wild honey, fruits, berries, seeds, nuts and vegetable foods 137
such as yam and lily roots and green lily stems, are available in 262
season. And at the tail end of the monsoonal period the sea brings to this coast, particularly on the north-east, large supplies of drifting coconut and other edible nuts.

This, then, is roughly the position of the Arnhem Land 177
Reserve, and it is upon the natural products of this country that the Aboriginal inhabitants have in the past primarily depended. Today, however, the Aborigine does not rely solely on his environment for subsistence. Long years of alien contact have developed in him a desire for introduced goods, a desire which was fulfilled to some extent when the Mission stations were established.

In order to examine the picture more closely, and to see the 121
events presented in some historical sequence, we shall concentrate on the northern and eastern coast of Arnhem Land, and the
adjacent islands within the Reserve. This coast-line and these 177
islands experienced alien contact much earlier than did the inland boundaries, along the Roper River and the "Buffalo" plains. The actual interior of the Reserve, except for the bush country towards the Rose River in the south-east, the Arafura and Milin-

poles, painted with conventional designs and hung with vividly- 778
feathered strings, are stored in a special hut on the sacred dancing 796
ground. From this hut, the uterus, men emerge with them to posture and dance, while women also dance in the main camp: and the ceremonies of this cycle conclude with an elaborate bathing ritual in which both men and women take part.

The Djanggawul rituals belong to the *dua* moiety. People of 796
the *jiritja* moiety have some share in them through their mothers 616
and mothers' brothers; but they have their own ceremonies and
beliefs as well. Laindjung, a counterpart to the Djanggawul but 773
much less important, also came out of the sea to the Arnhem
Land coast from somewhere away to the east, and through his 177
son Banaidja established his mythology and rituals. Many such Ancestral or Spirit Beings are said to have reached the north coast of Australia by sea (see Chapter 5), and perhaps beliefs of this sort reflect some early experiences of alien contact, or some incidents which served as focal points for the diffusion of alien ideas. In western Arnhem Land, too, mythology reveals a strong alien orientation—although this feature may have been superimposed in later years as a result of Indonesian intrusion. Thus the great mother Waramurunggoindju and her husband Wuraggag (now the landmark Tor Rock), like Jurawadpad and most of their contemporaries, landed at various places on the Coburg Peninsula after travelling from some far island identified, today, as "Macassar".

Nevertheless, there has been inland influence as well. The 796
Djanggawul *nara* ceremonies, shorn of much of their mythological 177
significance, have spread right across to the borders of Western Arnhem Land. The two Wauwalak Sisters came overland from the south to the northern Arnhem Land coast, where they inspired the three age-grading ceremonies: the *djunggawon*, associated with circumcision, and known but not performed in western Arnhem Land (where most of the tribes are non-circumcising); the *kunapipi*, more recently introduced into eastern Arnhem Land; and the *ngurlmag*, rarely performed today, with its probable origin the *ubar* hollow-log initiation rituals of western Arnhem Land. The Kunapipi has been introduced into

796 western Arnhem Land, too, coming up from the south and the
177 south-east almost to the coast near Goulburn Islands.

The north-eastern people, like their western neighbours, pay
778 great attention to the outward expression of their religious ideas,
to provide a guide to ritual behaviour and to impress certain
concepts on the minds of postulants. Their sacred objects do not
consist only of those introduced by Djanggawul, Laindjung and
other Beings. In the *nara* and other rituals many beautifully made
rangga are used, some associated with natural species or with
totemic features, others with human organs and ancestral people.
778 Usually conventionalised, they are made from hard or soft
woods, cane or paperbark, sometimes bound with jungle-tree
532 twine, and decorated with clan totemic designs and colourful
feathered strings. Human figures carved from blocks of wood
are painted and ornamented in a similar way. Many other sacred
objects are used in the Wauwalak ceremonies – the *ubar* drum
of the *ngurlmag*, for example, the tall grass-bound *Jelmalandji*
posts of the *kunapipi*, and the long *julunggul* "trumpets" and
dancing posts of the *djunggawon*. In western Arnhem Land,
religious feeling finds concrete expression in the varied shapes
and designs of the *maraiin* objects, which include representations
of birds and animals. Their form and workmanship are usually
pleasing to the eye, but to the craftsman this is of secondary
importance.[2]

Let us summarise the place of indigenous religion among the
771 people of Arnhem Land.

In Aboriginal societies throughout Australia, this religious faith has been the mainstay of social life, giving meaning and background to behaviour patterns and institutions. Most people believed unquestioningly in the essential "rightness" of their way of life. Everything was explained, each member of the community had a definite place in the scheme of things, and the future was well determined.

Today, however, the Aborigines find that conditions are
771 rapidly changing. The pressure of contact is greater now than it
178 has been in the past. Beliefs that they have held for centuries are
being questioned, and new ways and ideas are being enforced.

CHAPTER 3

ALIEN CONTACT IN NORTH-EASTERN ARNHEM LAND

177 Here, and in the following Chapter, we shall summarise broadly the alien contact that has taken place on the Arnhem Land coast. By this means we may observe in some kind of historic perspective the panorama of contact, and the inevitable repercussions on the life of the Aborigines. Then, having outlined the main picture, we can proceed to fill in some of the details.

For our purpose here, much more material is available in eastern Arnhem Land than in the west on the native's attitude towards alien contact. The full effect of such contact in the western area was comparatively late, while in the east it extended over a much longer period. Because of this, the western people suffered more seriously from its deleterious effects, but the eastern groups, who had a much longer and even more intensive record of contact, were able to adjust themselves gradually, and apparently with greater success. Official documents tell us something of the contact that took place in Arnhem Land, but since the western regions were closer to white settlement and administrative centres, far more is available concerning them.

Let us look, first, at the eastern side.

No other group of Aborigines in the Northern Territory, or perhaps in all Australia, has been subjected to such intensive contact with alien peoples, over such a long period of years, as have the coastal natives of north-eastern and south-eastern Arnhem Land.

Their association with Indonesian voyagers, with Malayans, Macassans from the Celebes, and people from adjacent islands, commenced perhaps some hundreds of years ago, when these 177 travellers of the sea expanded their field to include the North Australian coast. They came in search of trade, of trepang (bêche de mer), tortoise-shell, pearl-shell, sandalwood and timber.

But even before this, so these Aborigines tell in the songs that 173 record and preserve their traditions, the "Baijini" people visited their shores. These Baijini, or pre-Macassans, also came from the western islands beyond the Arafura and Timor Seas; and the Aborigines still sing today of the ships in which these people [538] arrived, and the women who came with them; the stone dwellings they built on the Australian mainland; the cloth that they wove and dyed; the clothes they wore, and the way in which they speared fish and cultivated small gardens. They are said to have been paler than the Macassans, a golden brown or copper colour like certain flying foxes. The Baijini era is looked upon, [173] now, as belonging to the far-distant past – a part, almost, of the Ancestral Dreaming period, when the great Spirit Beings walked the earth. In some stories the Baijini are said to have been contemporaries of the most important among the Ancestral Beings, the Djanggawul Brother and Sisters.

The Aborigines distinguish this period from what they regard as historic times, when the Indonesians came sailing to the coast in their praus. They arrived with the north-west monsoons in October or November, staying for at least six months of the year and returning home again with the south-east winds. Occasionally some of them remained behind with their ships all through the dry winter, to be on hand when the fleets arrived at the beginning of the wet season.[1]

We cannot be certain of the approximate period when this 172 Indonesian contact commenced, but tentative calculations place it in the early sixteenth century. Numerous camp sites, archaeological remains, old graves and tamarind trees testify to a prolonged association. Some of the large Macassan settlements have left concrete evidence behind them. In the north-eastern corner, for instance, quantities of pottery fragments have been found on an island at the mouth of Port Bradshaw and along the adjacent mainland.

ARNHEM LAND

173 But it is in the realm of the great song cycles and the stories
538 which survive that a colourful picture of Malayan and Macassan
life on these shores is unfolded.

175 At various sites on the north-east and south-east coast of
Arnhem Land, at Arnhem Bay, Melville Bay, Port Bradshaw,
Trial Bay, Caledon Bay and Groote Eylandt, these Indonesians
of different types (not all true Macassan or Malay traders)
founded their settlements. They built their houses on stilts,
roofed them with woven leaves and fibre of coconut palm and
even furnished them in an elementary way. They kept fowls,[2]
fastened by one leg to the posts of the huts. Nearby they erected
large boilers, and racks for drying the trepang, and out in the
bays their ships were lying at anchor or being repaired. Each
main settlement was a hive of industry, with Macassans and Australian
Aborigines employed as labourers for specified payments.
There were bartering depôts. Local natives brought in pearls,
[439] tortoise-shell and other natural products that the Indonesians
wanted, and were given in exchange East Indies currency, introduced
foods such as rice and sweetmeats, or cloth, knives and
tobacco. This trade was well established and its influences are
still apparent today.[3]

The visitors not only brought goods from their own country.
While they were settled on the mainland they manufactured pottery,
knives, cloth and sails, and they kept written accounts of
their transactions with the Aborigines and with their own employees.
The effects of their sojourn are seen in some forms of
177 the local material culture. They introduced the dug-out canoe,
[501 which has almost replaced the indigenous bark variety, and it
326] was from them that the natives learned to use steel in making
knives, spear blades and tomahawks.

But it seems to have been in their diversions and entertainments,
or in their ceremonies, that the Indonesians exerted their
greatest influence on Aboriginal life. Watching them, the Aborig-
[524 ines learnt to play cards,[4] and began to adapt their song rhythms
533] to alien tunes and the sounds of foreign musical instruments.
Their mortuary ceremonies came to be associated with the de-
[764] parture of the praus, and with Macassan burial rites.[5] The important
secular ceremony of the carved *wuramu* figure, the

The important secular ceremony of the carved wuramu figure the
"Collection" or "Crook Man", was directly inspired by what 177
Aborigines had seen in Macassar and at home on the mainland.[6] [527]
At various places along the coast the visitors declared certain rocks to be sacred. They called them *karei*, or "King" rocks, and placed on them food and money as offerings to a guardian spirit. At the beginning and end of the trading season, it is said that the Indonesian fleets met in Arnhem Bay to perform ceremonies that culminated in wild debauchery. Alcohol was freely distributed. There were singing and dancing, fighting and flashing of knives, and the prostitution of Aboriginal women. But such scenes were more frequent during the later phase of Indonesian contact.

During the earlier period of contact the relations between the 177
Aborigines and the traders seem to have been most amiable, 648
although perhaps the memory of this has mellowed with the
passing of time. Trafficking in women, according to their tradi- 548
tion, was more carefully controlled. Organised relationships were 837
set up, where women went more or less automatically to the trading partners of their husbands or parents; and during the Indonesians' ceremonial periods they made gifts of food and other goods to the Aborigines, who reciprocated by sending over their women. Aboriginal women used to work in and around the huts of these traders, and the important leaders, such as captains of praus, maintained their own mistresses. It is said too that Indonesian women were very occasionally brought to these shores, but those who did come were for the most part treated as prostitutes. Alcohol was not so plentiful during this early phase of contact, and it was not until the period from about 1800 until 1907, when Indonesian trading was prohibited by the Commonwealth Government of Australia, that severe fights and brawls became common in these coastal settlements.

Over the years these visitors took back with them to Macassar 177
numbers of Aboriginal men and women. Some of them were 167
returned in the following season to their home camps in Australia while others remained behind in their new environment.[7]

It is difficult, after so great a lapse of time, to be sure of the 177
actual state of affairs in regard to sexual relations between Indo- 548
nesian traders and Aboriginal women. Many Aboriginal men 837
today deny that their womenfolk had illicit sexual relations to

171 any extent with the visitors, and Professor Lloyd Warner used
548 such statements as a basis for his opinion that the Malay traders
837 did not interfere with native women.[8] But the women themselves
offer a different point of view, and so do the songs and stories
which have survived to the present day. Men are often unwilling
to admit that they themselves, or people of their group, were
induced by threats or by liquor to barter their wives and daughters,
or that they allowed them to go to the traders because of
their ties of friendship and trading relations. Often they attempt
to "cover up" the fact that certain people are half or part Macassan,
by insisting that their light skin has a spiritual rather than a
purely physical explanation. The women, however, are more
candid, and many of the older ones among them openly regret
the passing of the Indonesian traders. Such an apparent contradiction
is not unusual in matters of this kind, when casual liaisons
have been carried out over a long period and then brought
suddenly to an end through pressure of external circumstances.

The contacts of these Baijini and Indonesian people may have
177 influenced the temperament of the coastal Aborigines, for they
[152] are (broadly speaking) more hasty tempered and emotional than
the southern and central Aborigines, given to aggressive displays
of anger and elementary warfare. The physical effects, however,
[144 apart from the infusion of an alien strain in the Aboriginal stock,
133] seem to have been negligible; their indulgence in alcoholic drinks
appears to have had no effect upon their general well-being,[9]
while venereal diseases are virtually unknown in this eastern
[164] region.[10] This contrasts with conditions at Goulburn Island and
Oenpelli, in western Arnhem Land, where the prevalence of
venereal diseases (especially gonorrhoea) seems to have led to a
[163] high incidence of sterility, and so to a declining birth rate.
Western Arnhem Land Aborigines have a reputation of being
837 sexually rather lax, whereas various writers have expressed the
opinion that the eastern Arnhem Landers are less willing to trade
their womenfolk and have consequently been better able to regulate
their sexual relations with "outside" people. Actually this
impression seems to have its origin in the fact that the sexual
pattern of both societies shows certain differences. The one is

more inclined to be blatant about sexual associations, while the 837
other, perhaps equally promiscuous, is less willing to acknowledge this fact in public.

Even before the memorable meeting of Captain Mathew Flin- 175
ders with Pobassoo, on 17 February 1803,[11] in the "Malay Road"
between the English Company Islands and the mainland near 177
Cape Wilberforce, Dutch and Portuguese voyagers had visited the north coast of Australia,[12] but their contact with the Aborigines seems to have been only transitory and unimportant. Before this, too, there is reason to believe that these coastal people had some association with native groups of the Torres Strait Islands
and southern New Guinea. This subject is treated in one of the [173
long song cycles of eastern Arnhem Land—although in later
years, when the Missions introduced Badu Islanders (from the 538]
Torres Straits), these indigenous songs proved receptive in some degree to new ideas concerning that area.[13]

Mathew Flinders was followed by other explorers and sur- 175
veyors,[14] until in the last quarter of the nineteenth century
European traders became increasingly familiar with the Arnhem 648
Land coast. About this time the relations between Macassans and 177
the Aborigines began to deteriorate, and a number of massacres of these Indonesian visitors[15] were reported. Intercourse between Aborigines and Europeans was far from amicable. Mass shootings took place, native women were abducted, and some white men were speared. There was an attempt to settle part of the "Arafura" country, between Milingimbi and Elcho Island; in 1885 Florida cattle station was established near Mount Delight, between the Woolen and Blyth rivers.[16]

When the Macassan visits to the north coast came to an end there was an influx of Japanese pearlers and traders, and a few Europeans began to concentrate on trepanging. These people employed on their boats Aborigines from Darwin, Bathurst and Melville Islands and Goulburn Islands, as well as natives from the Torres Strait Islands, so that the coastal Arnhem Landers came in contact with a variety of "racial" types. The Japanese, for example, did not remain for long on friendly terms with the local natives; there were occasional spearings and massacres,

175 especially in the region about Caledon Bay and Blue Mud Bay.
648 Some Europeans too were involved in spearings, so that by the
1930's the Aborigines of these parts had gained a reputation for
177 being "savage and warlike".

The natives, however, were not entirely to blame for their occasional attacks on invading strangers, who had not the long-standing trade ties of economic reciprocity and friendship that the Indonesians had enjoyed. When we look more closely into the underlying reasons we can understand that the Aborigines might well have resisted the insidious forms of exploitation, the low bartering estimates, and the constant interference with their womenfolk. Matters were accentuated by a punitive expedition led by police, which went with horses from Milingimbi to Blue Mud Bay and Caledon Bay,[17] and indiscriminately shot a number of Aborigines; while the killing of a police constable on Woodah Island, near Groote Eylandt, aroused a *crescendo* of publicity and outcry in Southern newspapers of the day.[18]

175 By 1930 several Mission stations had been set up at various
places along the coast, so that in succeeding years most of the
177 Aborigines in this region were in more or less constant contact
197 with missionaries. A Church Missionary Society expedition in
1934, and a local trepanger, apprehended some natives who were asociated with a Japanese massacre at Caledon Bay and brought them to Darwin for trial. Soon after this, in 1935, Dr Donald Thomson set out on a pacificatory expedition with the purpose of finding out the reasons for the hostility of these natives, the extent of Japanese contact, and the general nature of local conditions.[19] During the north-west monsoon season of 1935-36 and during 1936-37 unrest among these Aborigines became more marked, mainly owing to the invasion of the Arnhem Land Aboriginal Reserve[20] by large numbers of Japanese and European traders.[21] Missionary enterprise was extended and intensified too, attacking indigenous forms of social behaviour and morality in a way which met with little positive resistance — although attempts were made to oppose the less insidious intrusion of traders, bent on purely economic (and sexual) exploitation. Evangelisation became closely co-ordinated with the aim of establishing all along

the coast, centres of white settlement in the form of Mission 177
stations. These Mission bodies were interested mainly in the 175
problems of becoming self-supporting, of saving the Aborigines' 797
souls, and of disseminating European beliefs and conventions.

A little before war was declared between Australia and Japan 175
the visits of Japanese traders and pearlers to the Arnhem Land
coast were curtailed, and finally forbidden altogether. Army, 648
Air Force and Naval bases were formed in various parts of the 177
Northern Territory, particularly after the bombing of Darwin
in 1942-43. On the north-eastern coast the main camps of this kind were at Gove (Yirrkalla Mission settlement), Milingimbi, and the Wessel Islands, while there was a civil aviation and Air Force base at Groote Eylandt. Aborigines of these parts came subsequently into close contact with several thousands of Air Force and Army (as well as Naval) personnel. They were indented for menial work and employed in a variety of ways. Boats and 'planes were continually passing to and fro;[22] and the isolated crashes of a few 'planes, the activity of Army camp life and entertainment, and other phenomena of an artificial and abnormal life, heightened and altered the tempo of indigenous life. Traditional ceremonies and food-collecting were interrupted and curtailed, and the equilibrium of social life in general was far more deeply disturbed than it had been throughout all the preceding centuries of alien contact.

When these military establishments were finally abandoned 175
(the last, Gove, in April 1946) the Aborigines were left to Mis-
sions whose staffs had been depleted, and who could not provide 177
steady employment for the many natives who clustered about their stations. So the natives found themselves longing for the old times, when food and trade goods were generously distributed. The customary staid smoothness of Mission life, with its calm treatment of religion, they found depressing. Where, they asked, were the war-time picture shows, that brought before them rough-riding cowboys, lingering love scenes, and partially-naked white women, and the strange musical accompaniments of this form of entertainment? This nostalgia for past pleasures led to increasing signs of irresponsibility among the younger people, a

175 trend towards sexual excess and a desire for increased contact
●177 with Europeans.

Such is the general outline of the conditions that have some bearing on our main theme.

During the Malay-Macassan epoch the Aborigines seem to have
177 maintained a fairly well integrated pattern of culture, absorbing
648 or discarding new ideas without seriously disturbing its basic
structure. The early Indonesians were to the Aborigines just
[439] representatives of another clan or tribal group not greatly dissimilar to their own, and so they carried on trade with these visitors, just as they would with members of other clans who had desirable commodities to barter. It was a natural outcome of this that the Aborigines should extend their traditional codes of hospitality, making their womenfolk available to the Macassan traders.[23] When the strangers were thus provided with temporary or permanent wives, the social organisation of the groups and the personal opinions of their members were adjusted to suit both parties — and so a delicate problem was settled. Occasional arguments and fights did break out between them, but these were usually regarded as being comparable to inter-clan feuds or quarrels.

[273] Once the quantities of intoxicating drink began to enter the settlements, especially during the last phase of Macassan contact, relations began to deteriorate. There was irregular promiscuity, women were bartered in return for goods, and quarrelling and fights became more bitter and more frequent. Stories relating the sexual excess that took place during this period show how strongly this behaviour affected the psychological makeup of the Aborigines. Old women of north-eastern Arnhem Land like to talk about the days of Macassan contact, and they contrast the uneventful period of recent years with the time when drinking bouts resulted in sexual promiscuity, and food and clothing were easily obtainable. Even the time of plenty that accompanied the Air Force occupation was not the same, they say, as the old trading days and the glamour of the Indonesian visitors.

177 When the Japanese and European traders came to this coast,
648 the Aborigines at first resented their intrusion. "Why," they
439 asked, "do these strangers take the place of our old friends?"

However, they wanted the trade goods that these people could 177
provide, and so they made an effort to adjust themselves to this 648
new type of contact and to take up again the old traditional form 439
of trading to which they were accustomed.

But they soon found that conditions had changed. These strangers brought with them Aborigines from other areas, and preferred to exploit the wealth of marine products themselves, using relatively few of the local people. This, of course, restricted the distribution of trade goods which they had expected to receive in payment for their work. Large scale trading was curtailed and was almost entirely replaced by individual bartering. This led to general resentment and dis-satisfaction.

They discovered, too, that although these Japanese and Euro- 177
peans required native women for sexual purposes they were
rarely willing to compensate their rightful guardians and hus- 648
bands, preferring instead to decoy native women on to their
boats or (as frequently happened) to take them by force. These
same visitors paid no attention to native codes of morality and
social intercourse,[24] and preferred to enjoy variety in sexual
relations rather than to maintain one woman over a period. Any
reasonably attractive woman was sexual bait to these men, some
of whom admittedly tried to seduce as many of the younger ones
as possible. Such an attitude has not been confined to this north-
eastern coast. Many Europeans and Asiatics alike throughout the
Northern Territory regarded all Aboriginal women as potential
sexual partners, a state of affairs which exists to the present day.
The behaviour of Japanese and European traders, trepangers and
pearlers was modified in some areas because of the wariness and
hostility of the Aboriginal men. At Groote Eylandt, for instance, 562
native women were to some extent segregated from men even in
their own camp life.[25] But in other regions, as in western Arnhem
Land, it was accentuated.

Conditions of this kind resulted in various "massacres" and 177
spearings, which continued until the Japanese were excluded and 648
European trading was curtailed with the advent of the last war.
But this period of what might be termed mutual antagonism had 178
one good effect, which must not be underestimated. It forced
many of these Aborigines to avail themselves of their natural

177 648 178 resources and develop their own internal economy, the clans to become more closely integrated and the group as a whole more self-sufficient. They were no longer dependent primarily on export and import, spending a great deal of their time around the Macassan settlements. Such outside goods as did find their way into the society were soon absorbed. It is probable, too, that their womenfolk had far less sexual contact with Europeans and Japanese than with the Indonesian traders. There were never as many of these newcomers on the coast at one time as there had been Malays and Macassans, and the Aborigines were never on such intimate terms with them as they had been with their predecessors.

However, the growing intensity of Mission contact, and the presence during the war years of large numbers of European troops, seem to have destroyed the natives' resistance to alien infiltration. Soon the reaction set in — actually the culminative effect of long centuries of contact with peoples who were culturally and psychologically different to themselves; and the result was gradually increasing dependence on Europeans. The desire for new ideas, and for all the material benefits they could achieve, was accentuated: but these were to be obtained only at the expense of their own culture and ideology. Although in the past they had learnt much about the successful absorption of alien belief and practice, these latter years found them wanting in knowledge concerning the practical application of their experience to modern problems. The deviation between Aboriginal and European cultures was greater than that between Aboriginal and Macassan, so that the present day finds these people largely unprepared for the changes that are upon them. Important aspects of their traditional life are disappearing. Religious fervour for the "old gods" is weakening; law and order are becoming more and more a matter of external control; and general disillusionment, with increased sexual laxity, accentuates these features that accompany a period of transition.

144 164 While the effects of long alien contact are only too apparent insofar as the native culture is concerned, the direct physical effects (excluding the effect of Asiatic and Indonesian strains on the Aboriginal stock) are few.[20] The fact that venereal disease are

175 648 Reserve? It was their own territory, where their ancestors had lived, and they were bound to it by strong spiritual ties. Laws were passed by an alien Government, about which they knew very little, and which was (so they thought at that time) no concern of theirs. Japanese, and a few Europeans, were still round the coast; conditions had not perceptibly changed.

175 648 ●177 197 Since the termination of Indonesian contact there had been a lag in trading, but the Missions, which since 1916 had been spreading along the coast, were helping to fill this gap. From that date, and much earlier in the Roper River area, the Aborigines began to drift into these Mission stations and to avail themselves of the opportunities they offered. They did not as yet distinguish between the different forms of contact. The Japanese aims of exploitation were, in their eyes, very much the same as those of the Europeans, while they scarcely differentiated between these white traders and the missionaries. European traders and missionaries, officials and police, were representatives of an alien form of Government, which did not recognise the hereditary rights and legal codes of the Aborigines themselves.

175 648 177 How could these people judge differently, when they observed from actual cases that the missionaries, trepangers and police worked hand in hand together—as, for instance, during the Caledon Bay trial? They realised too that the Europeans were unwilling to believe them, particularly in the matter of evidence given in court. Their dialects were not understood, and the interpreters at their disposal not always reliable. What was justice to them was crime to the Europeans, an outlook largely determined by the cultural pattern of each group.

So the natives were thrown on their own resources, and felt obliged to settle the matter of their defence in their own way. When this conflicted with European interests, they seem to have realised that they would have to sublimate their own views, or else pay the full penalty of acting on their own initiative; and this penalty involved either physical violence or imprisonment or both. In the white man's court of law the Aborigines were inarticulate, and powerless to defend themselves. Had they known that an increasing number of white Australians were interested in their welfare, and ready to step forward in their

defence, they might have been flattered. It is hard to tell. More 175
probably they would have dismissed these people and their 648
sympathy as being irrelevant and negligible, for the eastern
Arnhem Landers, in particular, have a strong sense of their own 177
importance. These aliens did not know them intimately and personally, had not lived with them, and understood nothing of their language, and the complexities of their tribal life. No, for the time being (so they seem to have decided) they would have to depend on themselves alone, until they became articulate and their rights, as a minority, were realised and appreciated.

So much for the early days of the Arnhem Land Reserve, and for the attitude of the Aborigines living within it. We shall return later on to this subject, and see just how far conditions have changed today.

What were the direct results of the murders of Europeans and 175
Japanese during the early 1930's? The opinion of Australians in
general, apart from those who were indifferent or apathetic, 648
seems to fall into three main categories. The extremists held that "the niggers should be taught a lesson", and that the best means of doing this was a punitive expedition. Such measures, they contended, had always succeeded in the past. The natives were, so to speak, beaten into subjection, and "cheeky" behaviour effectively discouraged. The conservative view, on the other hand, was that the culprits should be brought to justice and punished, and so made an example to others. The moderates insisted that a pacification expedition should be sent to Arnhem Land, the true circumstances of the killings investigated, and conditions altered so that there would be no need for a recurrence. As we have seen, the conservative plan was adopted and the extremist viewpoint officially discarded, while an attempt was made to put into practice the moderate view. Let us, then, glance in greater detail at some of these repercussions.

When the Minister of the Interior at Canberra heard that Traynor and Fagan had been killed by Aborigines, he declared that the matter was serious, and that some attempt should be made to secure the safety of white men legitimately engaged in the Territory.[4] The Darwin *Northern Standard* of 5 September 1933

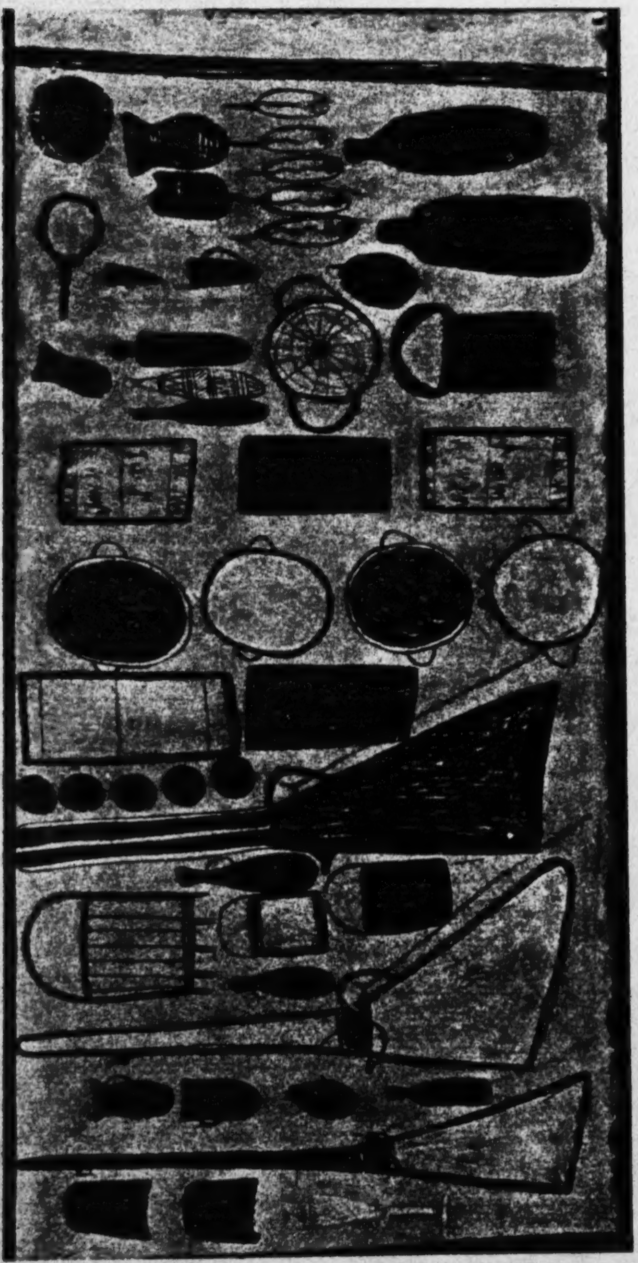

Plate 13: Drawing: Various articles that were introduced by the Indonesians.

[facing p. 183]

But although Dr Thomson's reports showed the disastrous 175
results of Japanese infiltration, nothing really effective was done 648
in respect of this until the end of 1941 brought war with Japan.
Then, at last, intercourse of these people with the Aborigines was brought to a close.

Little has been said here concerning missionary enterprise in 177
Arnhem Land, a form of contact which has profoundly influenced certain aspects of native life, even though it has only a partial bearing on the main theme of this book. We shall refer
to this again in the following chapter. Another factor with which 177
we have not dealt concerns Prof. Lloyd Warner,[19] already mentioned, who carried out anthropological work, principally in the 114
Milingimbi area, between 1926 and 1929 — that is, before the epoch we have been considering in this chapter. This was the first detailed anthropological work undertaken in the Arnhem Land region;[20] and it is reasonable to suppose that his studies did, to some extent at least, influence native thought. He and his work were still remembered in 1946-47, more or less clearly, by natives along the coast from Milingimbi to Yirrkalla.

CHAPTER 18

THE PRESENT DAY

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177

Looking back over the years we can glimpse, in perspective, the panorama of contact that the Arnhem Landers have had with peoples of alien groups. We have seen, too, something of the effects. At first, the Aborigines were willing to adjust themselves to foreign ways. This period lasted for some time, and was accompanied by a certain amount of assimilation, but its main feature was the gradual conditioning of these natives to the waves of contact that were to follow. While they were adjusting themselves to Indonesian infiltration and settlement, they were at the same time building up a strong resistance against other forms of alien contact; and they were absorbing into their own culture certain new elements, rejecting others that could not readily be adapted to the existing pattern. Religious ideas, ceremonies and song-cycles, as well as material objects, were accepted, and welded on to the indigenous framework without destroying its basic structure. The new economic organisation that arose had its origin in local as well as in alien forms. During this early period the Aborigines' social horizons were extended and their world was no longer the small place that it had been; and for some of them, too, this involved travel and personal observation beyond the confines of the Australian mainland.

As time passed European visitors, settlers and traders made their appearance, shattering the delicate balance that the Aborigines and Indonesians had built up on the basis of their trading relationships. This Arnhem Land coast, that the Indonesians had looked on as their own preserve, was now disputed by a nation which extended its dominion over the Australian mainland. An era had drawn to a close, and the last phase of Indonesian contact had begun.

As the years passed, as the settlers penetrated steadily into western Arnhem Land and European exploration was intensified, these new traders extended their fields, and ill-feeling developed between Indonesians and Europeans. All this led to a period of unsettlement as far as the Aborigines were concerned. Their smoothly functioning trading ties were broken. Competition became the order of the day, and with it came thinly-disguised exploitation.

The Indonesians not only clashed with the Europeans. They succeeded in stirring up unrest and antagonism among the Aborigines – antagonism that was later manifested against European and Indonesian alike. In the confusion that followed, with the rush to exploit local products and available native labour, the Aborigines received the full impact of these unsettled times. The result for them was, in the western region, disaster and depopulation, and in the east, spasmodic fighting to assert themselves and to defend their rights. When the Indonesian trading was brought to a close the whole position was accentuated and the increased activities of the European traders did not serve to improve matters.

Japanese visitors, too, became more numerous and helped to bring about a state of affairs in which the Aborigines were more or less continually on the defensive. It was this background that produced the murders and "massacres" of the early 1930's. But even then, although Arnhem Land received a great deal of attention from interested and dis-interested bodies in the South, as well as in the Territory itself, conditions remained fundamentally the same. Certainly, physical violence was largely reduced, but many other insidious forms of contact continued. Through Dr Thomson's recommendations, permission to enter Arnhem Land was granted less readily to traders and other non-Aboriginals, especially since in 1931 this region had been declared an inviolable Reserve. But this did not really check the influx of Japanese into these coastal waters. In fact their infiltration was intensified during this period and brought with it, as we have seen, many

175 197 ●[177 361] virtually encircled Arnhem Land. Static camps of natives (severely criticised in Dr Thomson's reports) were formed at all these places, so that today, and as the years pass, more and more natives look to one or more of these stations as their "home". They remain in the Bush for increasingly shorter periods, finding it always harder to keep away from these centres as they come to rely on the introduced food and trade goods. And so they find it necessary to pay lip-service to Christianity.

We are not concerned here with discussing in detail missionary endeavour in this region, because this would require a great deal more space than can be spared for it here. Readers interested in this form of contact should consult the relevant Government reports, as well as those issued by the Mission bodies themselves.[5] No scientific study of this problem has as yet been made in Australia. Here, however, we are interested only in broad principles. More detailed discussion of Mission and administrative policies, against a background of the general Australian situation, is given by Professor Elkin in his *Citizenship for the Aborigines.*[5a]

175 177 197 Mission activities before the recent War were virtually confined to establishing themselves on a more or less self-supporting basis. And since they were centres of white settlement, with them came many features of European culture. This is an important point to remember. These missionaries not only brought certain elements of their own Christian doctrine, but also carried with them the essential ingredients of their own culture. Whether or not the missionary desired it, the acceptance of Christianity by the Aborigines thus involved their simultaneous adoption of European ways, at the expense of their own culture and their own religion. If the Aborigines wanted to live in peaceful association with these missionaries and to receive their alleged benefits in the form of food, goods and education, they were obliged either to discard their own way of life or to adjust it in some way to changing conditions. In actual practice they were left with no alternative. Conditions were unsettled, alien influences demoralising, and tribal disintegration imminent. Gradually they drifted into the stations, hoping to take advantage of their presence, and at the same time to retain their traditional heritage.

But it was not possible for any group, under the circumstances 175
in which the Arnhem Landers found themselves, to have their 177
cake and also to eat it. 797

The Missions were interested in gathering together groups
of natives around the stations. Only in this way could settlements [361]
be built up, and the new ways firmly entrenched in the minds of the natives. They built houses in which to live, and churches in which to propagate their religion – for this was, after all, the main reason for their presence. Gardens were cultivated; and some of them engaged in trading; for missions had to be economically "safe", just like other forms of business. Schools at this period functioned very intermittently. Their range of subjects was limited and related primarily to religious training. Aboriginal children were not given a clear picture of European culture and its relation to the rest of the world, nor taught how to adjust themselves to these new conditions. Food was distributed either for work accomplished, or virtually as "bait" to attract natives to visit the stations, or to attend church or school. But on the whole the work of missionaries seems to have been dictated by purely humanitarian ideals.

The functioning of their stations depended greatly on the per- 175
sonality of the superintendents, and on their tolerant and sym-
pathetic understanding of Aboriginal custom and belief. The 797
Missions were acting as bulwarks against more unpleasant aspects of European and alien contact. They did demonstrate to the natives that all Europeans were not the same, and that some had more kindly intentions than others. Missionaries attended to the sick, the aged and the young. But these early years of Mission contact were mainly occupied with "digging in", with establishing their position and developing a formula by which to approach their problems. The natives had now a refuge to which they could retreat. In spite of all this, the presence of Missions did not prevent their contact with the Japanese and the European traders.

With the first raid on Darwin on 19 February 1942, when 175
the North was thrown into confusion, Japanese trading activities
ceased. Plans were made to evacuate female missionaries (as well 648
as civilian women and children), and many of the mixed-bloods from Croker Island and Groote Eylandt; and the whole northern

175 part of the Territory was placed under complete military control
648 as from 21 February of that year.[6]

The Aborigines of Arnhem Land soon realised this position. Some drifted back to the bush, while others stayed around the Missions, with their skeleton male staffs. Others again, particularly from the Roper River, from western and south-western Arnhem Land, and from Milingimbi, went overland to seek employment with the Army, and later on special Army native settlements were set up along the main North-South road.[7] The Missions tried to keep going, but owing to staff shortages their work was virtually at a standstill. Everything was subordinated to military control and activity. The Army made patrols out to Oenpelli, and to other places on the fringe of Arnhem Land. The Air Force set up bases at north Goulburn Island, near Oenpelli, at Gove (near Yirrkalla), in the Wessels, and on Groote Eylandt. At Gove, the largest of these, hundreds of Army, Naval and Air Force personnel were stationed or passed through, and came into direct contact with local Aborigines. Many of the natives themselves experienced something of the more unpleasant aspects of warfare. Milingimbi station was bombed, and in the Wessels three natives lost their lives when a missionary was taken prisoner on a Japanese seaplane. Naval boats patrolled the coast fairly regularly, and aeroplanes were a common sight to the natives.

175 Without dwelling at any length on this period, we may say
177 briefly that it brought with it further unsettlement. The Aborigines were thrown into intensive contact with a great many people belonging to a very different culture, and representing various shades of opinion and behaviour within that culture. Apart from physical appearances, they were in the natives' eyes quite unlike previous visitors. They were neither traders nor officials, police nor missionaries, but a group which, as far as the natives were concerned, was more or less disinterested. Some treated the local people in the way that Europeans usually did, and others looked on them rather as fellow human beings. Their services were required from time to time; they were employed in various ways, receiving payment in money or goods, and many of them also were given presents of various kinds.

THE PRESENT DAY

Military contact upset the Aborigines' economic system, and caused some disorganisation in their camp life. They were so thoroughly preoccupied with the intruders that certain features of indigenous life inevitably suffered. Or rather, perhaps, the disintegration that had really commenced early in the 19th century, and was intensified in the 1930's, was precipitated. Elements that had been weakened by this early strain were now yielding ground. Insubordination became common among younger men and women, and certain established codes of behaviour showed signs of collapse. Strange and novel aspects of European culture were thrust upon them, and often they were bewildered with what they saw, and confused at what they heard. The impact had been sudden, and not gradual as it had been in the past; and although these Arnhem Landers had been conditioned throughout the centuries against alien contact, they were not ready to receive it in such force, and at such speed, as this. 175 177

However, this military contact, which lasted for approximately four years, did have some beneficial effects. The Aborigines came to realise that European culture and opinion were not uniform and static, but existed in various forms. This was all to the good. Many of the natives developed a strong desire to learn more about European conditions, and how these affected their own way of life. In some instances they became articulate, and demanded some form of practical education and training through which they could achieve this knowledge; but this, of course, was not general. Many young men and women who sought these aims were classed as revolutionaries by older people, who believed that they were trying to weaken tribal authority and cast aside the traditional dictates of their group. It is true, too, that in some cases this was the underlying motive, a consequence of the unsettled period through which they had come. But there were some who genuinely desired to find means of adjusting themselves and their culture to European ways. They desired, indeed, something that few Europeans were capable of giving. Missionaries, administrative officers, and even anthropologists, had not gone deeply enough into the practical side of this problem.

The military forces, too, satisfied the Arnhem Landers' love of material possessions. To most of them, it was like a return to the

175 177 old Indonesian days of plenty. Organised work was available; and in return they received food, clothing, tobacco, and other objects which they considered necessary to their well-being. This proved to be another disintegrative feature, for indigenous forms of economy were disturbed, and the Aborigines came to rely on the European to supply their immediate needs. There was not, now, the urgent need to hunt and forage for food; and they tended to congregate fairly regularly in one place, usually on the Mission station or near the military settlement.

This particular form of contact is so recent that is is very difficult to see its problems in true perspective. It is possible only to observe the effects with care, and to conjecture as to the future.

175 177 797 Civilians were allowed to return to Darwin on 28 February 1946, and civil administration was resumed from the end of July 1945.[8] In the years that followed, up to the present day, the Missions have been concerned primarily with re-establishing themselves, after losing so much ground during the War period. Mission staffs were depleted, and only now are being built up again. New buildings had to be constructed, new gardens cultivated. In fact, all aspects of their work needed reconstruction. Some Missions suffered more than others; but actually all benefited from this renovating approach, for most were desperately in need of this even before the War. The old relatively lethargic ways of the past, although they were virtually pioneering days, had to go, if Mission contact was to be of constructive value to the Aborigines themselves. Saving souls for the indefinite future was really to no purpose; the natives required practical help in the problems which beset them. And today the majority of the missionaries realise this aspect of their work. They are educational and humanitarian agents of their culture, and their presentation of formal religion should take a secondary place.

000 If the long period of unsettlement in Arnhem Land is to end, if the new epoch of which we spoke previously is to continue, and if the Aborigines are to be adjusted to changing conditions and a European way of life, then the missionary and the administrator must have a common purpose: to develop among these Aborigines some understanding of European culture and ideals,

197 Today more Northern Territory missionaries and Native Affairs' officers are going out on to the field with these ideas in mind, assisted by some elementary training in anthropology. This is a beginning that promises well for the future. But some missionaries are still distrustful of anthropological methods, and view with uneasiness any plans for the eventual independence of the Aborigines.

In the past, and even now, it has been the practice of the Methodist Overseas Mission to employ Fijian missionaries on its Arnhem Land stations. This has brought about an additional problem. Contact of alien groups with Arnhem Landers has through the years been sufficiently complex without adding still further elements. Such Fijians have tried, often unconsciously, to re-create the conditions of their homeland, to surround themselves with an artificial environment that bears little relation to the problems of the Aborigines.

In 1946 it was proposed to establish a training centre at Gove Settlement, near Yirrkalla, where the Native Affairs' Branch had taken over quantities of Air Force equipment. This in itself was an excellent idea. But the choice of area was unsatisfactory, and being close to the Mission station aroused considerable hostility among the Methodists in the South as well as in the Territory. Today the plans for this ambitious project have been shelved, although it is said that they have not been entirely abandoned. Mission schools are only just beginning to function again, and the Arnhem Landers have no opportunity of availing themselves of secular education.

177 Since the recent War, Arnhem Land has been the focal point of anthropological and other expeditions. Apart from the work of Professor A. P. Elkin and the present writers, in eastern and western Arnhem Land, the Aborigines have been subjected to the large National Geographic party, composed of Australians and Americans. Just what bearing this work will have on the future of Arnhem Land and its people has yet to be seen. Moreover, writers and photographers have travelled through Arnhem Land, although their contact has been relatively superficial. Patrols have been made by members of the Native Affairs' Branch, especially in the Liverpool River district, and around the Cato River near

Yirrkalla; and the Government patrol vessel *Kuru* has travelled 177
at intervals along the coast. There is talk, too, of establishing a [164]
new Church Missionary Society Leper Station at Bickerton Island, near Groote, instead of sending local people in need of treatment away to the Channel Island Leprosarium in Darwin Harbour.

The natives are still receiving a fair amount of European contact, apart from the missionaries and Native Affairs' patrol officers. But this is quite unlike what they experienced before the War. There is not, as yet, the same economic exploitation once indulged in by Japanese and European traders. Arnhem Land has been closed to outside commercial undertakings, and there is a feeling today that the natives should be able themselves to exploit their land and marine products, and to develop industries which will be remunerative to themselves. But in such a plan there are many pitfalls. Recently, for example, European pearlers and trepangers have been permitted by the Administration a base at Truant Island, to the north-east of the English Company Islands, and to engage as employees a certain number of local natives. Crocodile shooters are creeping in too, slipping along the coast and down the tidal rivers. And the Aborigines are wondering, with mixed feelings, if this will be the thin edge of the wedge, and whether the old days will return.

From the verbal literature of the Aborigines and the written 00 0
data of the Europeans we have been able to learn something of the colourful past of the Arnhem Land coast. The unknown has been pushed back to a time when the Great South Land of Australia was still unvisited by Dutch, Portuguese and other Europeans – a time when intercourse with the outside world was at a minimum and, according to local mythology, the great Spirit Beings moved about the land.

We have been concerned primarily with the Arnhem Landers as they were and as they are. The problems emerge themselves from our study; and with them – if we are to learn from mistakes of the past – some of their solutions. The stage is set for almost anything. The administration and the Missions have it in their power to implement a policy which will be of lasting benefit to

000 these people; and it rests with them whether the Aborigines will be plunged into another period of unrest, or will gradually become adjusted to changing conditions. If they were completely
177 segregated, cut off from the outside world, their society and culture would in time recover their equilibrium. But they cannot live under such artificial circumstances today. Even if their Reserve is officially inviolable, influences are being brought to bear upon them from within and beyond its boundaries. There are missionaries, Government and police officials, passing ships, medical men, scientists, and other visitors; and for the most part less directly associated with these natives, but important in their ultimate effects, are the men (and women) of the Territory who would like to see the Reserve, with its 31,200 square miles, thrown open once more to European enterprise and activity.

006 As the Northern Territory develops, the very existence of this Reserve must from time to time come under review. There will be (as there has been) commercial pressure on the Government by firms and individuals anxious to exploit its economic potentialities.

To the citizen of the South, and even to the Territorian, Arnhem Land is still a glamorous land of mystery, the site, perhaps, of untold wealth. Still rumours will come of reefs of untouched gold, reminiscent of those that started the fruitless search of the Robinson prospecting party in 1875-76. The story of oil will be revived, and people will remember the Naptha Petroleum Company on Elcho Island. Wolfram and tin miners will still decry the boundaries of a Reserve that keep them from the rich seams which they envisage there; and even recently there have been rumours of radio-active minerals in southern Arnhem Land.

What of the interior of Arnhem Land, explorers and prospectors will ask? For few Europeans have traversed its rugged plateaux, and parts are still completely unknown. What of the manganese collected by the Macassans, and the rich cypress forests that are comparatively untouched? What of the cattle combines in search of new land to run their hordes, thinking of the fertile plains around the old Florida station in the Arafura

602 more than a mere term of address, and carries with it a
431 definite pattern of behaviour. It is well known that the giv-
602 ing or exchange of presents establishes or affirms a bond between individuals. When an aborigine meets a relation of a certain order, for example a person to whom, under the classificatory system, he extends the term brother, he may have an obligation to make a present to him. If it happens that his only available wealth is a shirt or a pair of trousers he will hand these over to discharge his obligation, receiving a gift in return, which may chance to be a ragged shirt or a tattered, worn-out pair of trousers. The important point is that a gift has been exchanged and reciprocal obligations discharged. If one man should happen to be the loser, in the economic sense, this is of little moment. The transaction is in no sense barter or exchange; it is a gift pure and simple, without any assessment of value, and with no deliberate *economic* import, in response to a *social* obligation laid down by the kinship structure into which every man is born. One of the men has given a present to the other. Failure to reciprocate would lay the recipient open to a charge of meanness, and what is even worse, he would lose face, and would in any case remain under an obligation to repay the gift at some future date.

121 The purpose of the present communication is to give an
•177 431 account of the basic economic structure and organisation

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[601] modification of the pattern applied to their own actual fathers and
[602] mothers.

The kinship organisation provides also for the old and the sick, who are fed and cared for, not as a charge on the society, but by their own kin, who accept the responsibility without question as part of the pattern of life in which they have grown up. Cruelty or neglect of old people and children is unknown among the people of Arnhem Land.

of the natives of North-eastern Arnhem Land, and to show [121]
how the impact upon these primitive hunting people of a 177
virile culture from Indonesia, which has probably occurred 431
only during the past two hundred years, has stimulated a remarkable ceremonial exchange cycle so that goods were passed far inland from the coast, while others were drawn from places hundreds of miles to the southward. This cycle, though in itself primarily social and not economic, supplies the motive force, the "drive", under cover of which an elaborate system of *ceremonial exchange* has been developed. This in turn furnishes the mechanism for the circulation of wealth or *gerri* (applied collectively to "goods" or "possessions", to material wealth), that would have been restricted, or at least rendered difficult, by the social structure of these people without the influence of the culture from Indonesia.[5]

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[5] The fact that ceremonial exchange systems appear to have been [171]
widespread in Australia has been pointed out (see page 2). But the 619
special type of local organisation which occurred in Arnhem Land, 721
combined with the war-like reputation enjoyed by these people, would have tended to restrict communication. A remarkable feature of the social organisation of Arnhem Land north of a line from Bennet Bay and east of Cape Stewart, is the absence of any tribal organisation. The absence of tribal organisation to provide a basis for a wider solidarity, such as exists in neighbouring territories, has tended, as is shown on pages 9 to 13, to foster an intense internal solidarity within the clan, and within the larger group which consists of an aggregation of clans, called *mälla*; and thus to intensify the opposition with other groups. The effect of this social organisation, which was probably unstable, seems to be reflected in the intense and bitter rivalry and almost constant fighting, which raged among the hordes in far Eastern Arnhem Land, and which was responsible for many deaths. These are not conditions which encourage free intercourse and communication between groups widely separated, and although an extensive ceremonial exchange system undoubtedly existed long before visitors from the

[121] 177 Before discussing the effect of the ceremonial exchange cycle which was greatly stimulated by the impact of this dynamic force—the infiltration of Indonesian culture—upon the relatively simple culture pattern of these people, I shall describe in outline the typical culture of this area. It can be shown that in their own culture pattern, before the impact of Malay or proto-Malay culture, the natives of Arnhem Land already possessed the essential elements of a simple economic structure, with recognition of "value" and "wealth", the beginnings of the development of craft specialisation, mechanisms for the organisation of work and the carrying out of communal enterprises, and very definite ideas about the division of labour.

174 It is not possible to state with certainty when the first contact with the Indonesian visitors commenced, but in 1803 Matthew Flinders[8] learned from the crews of Malay praus whom he met on the north coast, that sixty praus, with a total of 1000 men, all from the Gulf of Boni in the Celebes, were on the coast of Arnhem Land at one time and were engaged in fishing for trepang. Although some of these people informed Flinders that they had visited the coast for the first time only twenty years before, and that they were then among the first of their people to do so,

177 431 619 721 Celebes came to Arnhem Land, it is probable that the *gerri* introduced by these visitors did much to overcome the effects of the segmentary organisation and to infuse life and vitality into the ceremonial exchange cycle which developed on a large scale in this territory. One of the aims of this paper is to show how the impact of this virile Indonesian culture may have overcome the effects of the intensely *segmentary* organisation. This effect of the ceremonial exchange cycle on social organisation is discussed in detail at a later stage in this paper.

[8] Matthew Flinders, *A Voyage to Terra Australis*, Vol. 2, 1814, pp. 228-233.

Matthew Flinders had already recorded evidence which he had found as far south as Vanderlin Island in the Sir Edward Pellew Group on the southern shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria, of previous visits by some Asiatic people. 174

From the general demeanour of the natives of the Gulf of Carpentaria, as recorded by Flinders in the narrative of his voyages, it is highly probable that praus from Indonesia had visited Arnhem Land, at least sporadically, for a very long time, much longer than the statement made to Flinders would suggest. But even on the information which he recorded, we know that regular voyages to Australia occurred at least as far back as about 1780.

The Australian aborigines are extremely conservative, 177 ●
and before absorbing any important element of culture, 181
social or material, they generally give it a place in their myth pattern and bring it within the totemic scheme. This provides a background in tradition and so gives a charter for its use. The importance of this will be appreciated more readily when the account of the social organisation in Eastern Arnhem Land, which follows on pp. 8-13, has been read.

or south-east season, and "shades" of boughs in the very 221
hot dry weather, to the crescentic and semi-circular houses 342
thatched with teatree bark, and the more elaborate rectangular 361
huts of stringybark which are used in the wet season,
and are of a more or less permanent nature. The large rectangular [177]
houses were, however, probably developed or
modified as a result of Malay or Macassar influence.

When the flood waters subside after the storms and rains 221
of the north-west season, the large wet season camps break 361
up into small groups consisting of a few families, which disperse to lead a nomadic life within the confines of their own clan territories. Each phase, each season, has its own related food supply, and this is the chief factor which determines the daily activities of the people and also the area in
which they are to be found at any time of the year. As the 221
season advances and the grass dries, they practise systematic 224
burning of the country in conjunction with their hunting activities. This is not a random business; it is well organised, and is carried out by the men as a communal enterprise, although in a restricted and controlled manner, with "drives" for kangaroos, wallabies or other game.

The actual burning of the grass is directed by the old 224
men of the clan, or by others who have an hereditary right, 887
especially by men of other clans who stand, under the kin- 614
ship system, in the relationship of *wäkku* (son, woman 602
speaking; sister's son, man speaking) that is, men to whom
the clan is *yindipulo* (see pp. 11, 12). Such men are necessarily [616]
members of the opposite moiety, and to those unfamiliar with the people, they may appear to usurp the authority, to dominate the affairs, of clans to which they do not belong.
But it is part of the traditional behaviour in this area, that 602
certain people of *dua* moiety carry out some of the ritual 614
tasks for members of certain clans of *yiritja* moiety to which 616

orders (mother-in-law and husband of mother-in-law[25]) 192
to build up goodwill, *märaŋguma*, lit. "to build 431
up *marr*" (see page 37) and deliberately intended to [606]
leave a feeling of obligation (*vide supra* page 43).

(5) *buḵu djauyun*, straight-out exchange or barter, in 192
which one article is balanced against another. In Arnhem 431
Land, where the ceremonial aspect even of transactions 437
in which commodities change hands, is stressed, it is the "giving" that is the important matter, the rite, the gift and counter gift, rather than the assessment of its value or equivalent (see below no. 6).

(6) *mälli*, buy or purchase. The idea of direct purchase 177
is foreign to the Arnhem Land socio-economic pattern 192
and probably owes its origin to the influence of 437
Indonesian culture. In former times the Macassar [648
voyagers arrived on the coast of Arnhem Land with 175]
the north-west monsoon and dispersed along the coast to their regular fishing stations, vessels returning again and again to the same areas which they had visited in previous years and where they set up depots on shore for the boiling and smoking of *bêche-de-mer* or trepang.

The Macassar voyagers recognised the native ownership 427
of land, and the people say that they paid tribute each season 648
to the owners of the territories for the right to fish for trepang
and pearls. In referring to this *payment* by the Macassar [192]
visitors it is significant that the natives used the word *mälli*. My informants stated that the natives themselves did not actually work for the Macassar trepangers but occa-

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[25] The special status of this man as the recipient, depends chiefly upon the fact, not that he is *ḵauwäl* (mother's brother), but that he is the husband of *muḵul rumaro*, wife's mother, actual or potential.

427 sionally, when men were short, they helped to make up the
648 crews of canoes which operated as tenders from the praus
in diving for trepang.

●177 Today the word *mälli*, with this idea of "payment", is
192
437 used principally in connection with the manufacture of
501 wooden dugout canoes, and these form part of the culture
773 complex that was left as a legacy by the Indonesian visitors,
a fact which is stressed in mythology.[20]

431 A glance at the various types of transactions listed above,
437 in which property, or *gerri*, changes hands, and in which
the natives' own terms and classification have been used,
brings out the fact that in all but one the social or ceremonial
aspect rather than the hard material or "commercial",
the strictly economic, is stressed, and that in
only one is the idea of direct *payment* or recompense, paramount.
[463] This is in the manufacture of the wooden dugout
canoe, *lippa lippa*, which, as will be seen in section 4, is
the work of special craftsmen. Apart from receiving it as a
gift, there are two principal ways of obtaining a canoe. The
first is by employing a craftsman to cut it, the second, called
"*täkkul koŋ gurrupän*", lit. "axe hand give", is to pay
the craftsman by presenting him with a steel axe, which,
after he has used it to cut the canoe, becomes his own
property.

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[20] There is some tendency to assume that these wooden canoes were once manufactured with stone axes. Actually proof is not lacking of the fact that the *lippa lippa* (wooden dugout canoe) was part of the culture complex introduced by the visitors from Indonesia and that these canoes were never made in Australia until after the introduction of the iron axe. (This, however, does not apply to the seagoing dugout outrigger canoes of Eastern Cape York Peninsula, North Queensland, which were made with native shell adzes, but which had a separate origin.)

[396] voyages in the open sea, the matter is different. These craft 501 are hollowed out of a single tree. They have no keels, but are quite smooth underneath, and today are built without outriggers (although these are said to have been used by the Macassars), and depend for their safety and stability as much on the skill employed in their manufacture as in [435] the seamanship of their crews. These *lippa lippa* are unlike any other element of material culture and are valued greatly. 173 The natives say that in former times the Macassar voyagers 439 brought these craft to Arnhem Land each season in their 648 501 praus and that a prau carried as many as eight or ten *lippa lippa*. When the time came for their departure, the Macassar men presented the canoes to the natives as part of their farewell payment, and this became a ceremonial occasion.

●177 Before the coming of the Indonesian voyagers the natives 501 used only bark canoes,[29] called *bärwän*, and swimming logs, [396] and it was only after the introduction by the Macassars of the *lippa lippa*, together with iron tools for cutting it, that the Arnhem Land people began making wooden canoes for themselves. Much labour is involved in the cutting of a big canoe, and none of the tools formerly used by the natives of Arnhem Land would have been fitted for [412] this work. Although they possessed stone axes and shell scrapers, they lacked such tools as the fine, strong, relatively efficient adzes made from shell such as were used by the sea-faring peoples of Cape York Peninsula. This fact, and the way in which the wooden canoe was introduced, as well as its association with the Macassar voyagers, has given the *lippa lippa* a special place in Arnhem Land culture. But

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[314] [29] The bark used is that of *Eucalyptus tetrodonta*, one of the "stringybarks", which is much used in technology. In addition to the manufacture of canoes, it serves for the roofing of houses and for the manufacture of certain vessels used for carrying water, as well as in the preparation of food.

it must be remembered that the *lippa lippa* and the iron 177 tools for cutting them were part of the pattern of Indonesian 501 culture adopted by these people from the Macassar voyagers.

In the case of the bark canoe, while a good deal 396 of skill and experience was needed in making the craft, the actual time involved amounted to a few hours only. A man was generally assisted in stripping the sheet of [476 stringybark,[80] and in the heating and folding of this, by his 602] wife or other near kin, and no special organisation was necessary to feed him, or to relieve him of the need to hunt, over a period of weeks. But with the building of a big seagoing dugout canoe the matter is different and a considerable amount of organisation is necessary to build and launch the craft.

Today there are three principal means of obtaining *lippa* 431 *lippa*. The first is as a gift of the kind called *tadoit* (pages 437 40-41), to send back the *marr* after a *ŋarra* or other cere- 396 mony, a means, however, which is uncertain because it cannot be solicited. Of the other and more direct methods of obtaining canoes, *ṉüḵḵül ḵoŋ gurrupün*, (p. 52) is probably the most favoured, while straight-out purchase (*mäḻḻi*) (pp. 51-52), in which the *djalimulimo* or *djärtunmirri* is directly engaged to carry out the work, is used less frequently. My informants said that the *djalimulimo* feeds [463] himself during the progress of the work. This means that he must either spend a considerable part of his time in hunting or fishing or that he must depend upon his wives or other female kin to feed him in the period during which he is actually cutting the canoe. More rarely, responsibility for feed-

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[80] Although most of these bark canoes, even those which are about 14 or 15 feet in length, are constructed from a single sheet of bark, some, especially in the Gulf of Carpentaria, are made from two or more sheets sewn together.

conservative, and this fact leaves a strong local stamp on 181
their material culture. Certain types of utensils may be 184
found only in one local area, and even spears, of which about [411]
30 different types occur in Arnhem Land, can often
be distinguished by a local preference for such minor
traits as the use of one particular bast fibre (*duiyärrḳ*) for
lashing, or of one resin—whether *ŋotjamän*, (*Canarium
australasicum*), *maipin bortj*[33] (*Erythrophloeum*), or the
hard, brittle, black resin of *lännapu*, (*Callitris*), "Cyprus
Pine", for each of which there may be a strong bias in a
certain local area. The use of such materials is laid down
by tradition, and the aboriginal craftsman is conservative,
not much given to experiment. He follows the pattern which
is traditional because he believes it was established by the
wäŋärr (his totemic ancestors).

In contrast with this extreme conservatism in the use 177 ●
of raw materials and in the technique employed in material 411
culture, it is sometimes surprising to find suddenly, in an
area as remote from outside contacts as far Eastern and
Central Arnhem Land were when I first went to live with
these people in 1935, 36 and 37, such elements as boomerangs,
(*ḳälli-gälli*), which are not made in this territory, bearing
all the marks of authenticity of specimens from Katherine
or Daly Waters—some two or three hundred miles away
to the south or south-west. And these are accompanied by [292]
such articles as the closely-woven forehead fillets called
ḳällämba, heavy and closely-woven "bibs" or aprons
called *mätta mätta*, *märtät* or *tjänauwo*, worn around the
neck, suspended on the chest during fights, and *büḳḳärämma*
or *bäḳḳa* (spears, having heads of ironwood with very long

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[33] *Bortj* is really liver and is apparently applied to this resin on account of the practice of moulding it into large lumps suggesting the lobes of a liver.

177 hooks, beautifully carved, and light bamboo shafts),
411 all of which are foreign to the culture of East Arnhem Land but are very characteristic of the regions to the west and south-west.

In answer to my questions as to the origin of these objects, I received at first only the laconic reply "*warnba*", or "*warnbaŋor*",[34] west or from the west, lit. west-from, and when I pressed the enquiry further, my informants added "*birr-barlai!*", far away from, a remote place. *Birr* is used to signify very great or very remote, in time or space, e.g. *pämmän birr*—a very long time ago, in the dim past.

The boomerang does not really belong to the Arnhem Land culture, although fine specimens are seen there not
[431] infrequently. These are not manufactured locally and almost always show the character of the territory far to the south and south-west, from which they came. Their
[534] value in this territory is no longer as weapons for fighting or hunting, but for ceremonial purposes—as "sing sticks" or clappers for beating time—in place of the short heavy ironwood sticks called *birlma* used to beat time for *männikai* ("sings" or chants) which are the accompani-
[435] ment of each ritual and ceremonial act. Such *gerri* which
177 bear the halo and glamour of the celebrated exchange cycle,
411 are imbued with *marr*, with *virtu* or "value" apart
431 from their practical uses, and accordingly, some of them are used as objects of material culture and become ceremonial objects and may acquire a symbolic significance.[35] At first my enquiries elicited only the fact that these items

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[34] -*ŋor'*, -*ŋora*, suffix expressing "motion from".

415 [35] A recent example is seen in the case of the boomerang, to
435 which reference has been made above, but other examples are not
778 lacking. One of these is *butulo*, recognisable as the replica (*mälli* lit. "shade") of an old square faced bottle carved from a block of

"from *warnba*" (the people of the west) entered the area 177
principally from the south-west, by way of the Raimbarāŋa 411
tribe, members of which have long been in the habit of 431
travelling down to outlying cattle stations and even to the overland stock route, and that this food then came east.

Again, the most characteristic type of spear in use 411
throughout Arnhem Land, including the northern shore- 431
line, is *ŋämbi*, a hunting and fighting spear with a detachable flint head, (see frontispiece), *ŋämbi lirra*, (*lirra*, lit. tooth), mounted with hard beeswax and not with resin. There are only two quarries from which flint spear [135]
heads are derived, but the best, the ones properly called [316]
ŋämbi, come from the quarry at *ŋillipidji*, in the hills near the Walker River in the hinterland of Blue Mud Bay. From this one quarry, of almost legendary renown, come most of the flint spear heads of Eastern Arnhem Land. These *ŋämbi lirra* are generally passed from hand to hand encased in a neat sheath of *Melaleuca* bark (*bärukälla*) called *djalk*—a name applied only to the sheath of this one type of spear and giving its name to *kumur djalk*, the quarter (*kumur*) from which these spear heads enter and of which they are the most characteristic feature. Great bundles of these fine spear heads pass from hand to hand throughout Eastern Arnhem Land, and even farther away to the south, beyond the Roper River, as well as to the west across the Liverpool. The second quarry, mentioned above, is located in the

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ironwood and which has now become elevated to the level of [778]
clan totem. In bygone days glass bottles which were occasionally 435
washed up on the beaches possessed special social value as material 415
for scraps and cutting implements. Similarly the wooden Malay anchor, with a single fluke, which was used by early visitors who came to Arnhem Land from the Celebes, has acquired a symbolic significance which is quite distinct from its original material value as the anchor (*luku*, lit. the foot) of a prau.

It is this
ceremonial exchange cycle, and the rule that *gerri* from 431
one direction pass to the opposite quarter, e.g. from *ḳumur* [182]
ḳätjirḳ and *ḳumur ḳärin* to *ḳumur miwait*, which provides [177]
the means by which such objects as boomerângs (*ḳälli-gälli*), a conspicuous foreign element in the area, have come from a region hundreds of miles away. It provides the motive force by which bundles of stone spear heads, (*lirra ŋämbi*), have come north from the far-famed quarry at *ŋillipidji*, and dispersed throughout the territory. There is, however, some flexibility in this arrangement for it is obvious that a man who receives a ceremonial present from a partner may pass it to one of a number of people situated in a fairly wide
geographical range. The natives refer to the routes along [192]
which *gerri* are passed as *duḳarr*, paths, or roads[37] because these have become fixed fairly definitely by tradition.
Objects of a certain type, such as boomerangs, although they [439]
are not manufactured in Arnhem Land but originate far to the south or south-west, may come by a south-western route along the Katherine River; from the south, up the Wilton by way of the Raimbaräŋa, a tribe of the interior, or they may come from the same source by a more easterly route via the Ritar'ŋo and Wagilläk clans, who, like the Raimbaräŋa, are interior people and are great rovers. (See map No. 2.)

This means that of a number of boomerangs manufac- 431 439

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[37] The use of the term "road" for these routes along which [171
objects passed within these ceremonial exchange systems, seems 192]
to have been general in Australia and Professor A. R. Radcliffe-Brown has furnished the following note from his experience of Western Australia:

"The way in which objects pass continuously in one direction (which the W.A. natives call a 'road') is illustrated by the presence of pearl-shell from the Kimberley District among the tribes of the Great Australian Bight."

kumur märnda exchange, gave me the following list of 431
gerri which he received from each of the five quarters or 439
kumur[38] which form the horizon of his exchange cycle.

(1) *Kumur miwait,* (east). *Kaiyit*[39] (iron headed spears) [411
and the round black pounding stones used throughout 412]
Arnhem Land, especially for pulverising *ŋätu,* (*Cycas* fruit). This stone, which comes from the English Company's Islands, is called *poipuro* by groups as widely separated linguistically as Kopapoiŋo (and the allied Tjämbarpoiŋo) on the one hand, and Mildjiŋi on the other. Sometimes *ŋämbi lirra* (flint spear heads), which form the most characteristic of the *gerri* from *kumur djalk,* to which they give their name, may, as has been indicated above, reach a man in North Central Arnhem Land (e.g. a man of Mildjiŋi clan of the Lower Glyde River) by an easterly route via the roving Ritar'ŋo people, thence along the southern side of Buckingham Bay.

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[38] Mildjiŋi use the same name for these groups, but the actual [192]
word *kumur* (sternum) becomes *biri* in this language.

[39] The natives of Caledon, Trial and Blue Mud Bays, on the [325]
Gulf of Carpentaria, have acquired much skill in the making of *kaiyit,* and the manufacture of fine spear heads has become almost an industry at Trial Bay. Even before I actually entered Arnhem Land I had been surprised to obtain on the Roper River, iron headed (so-called "shovel") spears from Woodah Island, Blue Mud Bay. I found it difficult to understand why iron spear heads should be passing down to the Roper from Blue Mud Bay, where there was no white settlement, where contacts even by sea were few, and iron relatively scarce and highly valued, into country where cattle stations had long been established and where iron was relatively
easy to get. But the explanation of this was found later, in the 182
discovery in Northern Arnhem Land of the existence of the cere- 177
monial exchange cycle, which supplies the motive force for the 431
great movements of *gerri* over distances of hundreds of miles, of 439
which this is a part, and to which impetus was given by the coming

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431 (2) *Kumur mnadäk* comprises calico, tobacco, blankets,
[C177 glass (the latter used for scrapers and highly valued in the
437] making of spears and other weapons), tomahawks, knives, belts, smoking pipes and other *gerri* of the type which are said formerly to have been obtained from the Macassars.
[C182 To fill the demand for *wetj* (page 78), and under the incessant
554] obligations of the ceremonial exchange system, these *gerri* are passed quickly to the southward—not so much under the urge for economic barter, as to fulfil obligations set up by the ceremonial exchange cycle and to gain the prestige, which the ability to send *gerri* of this order confers on the sender. For, while it will be seen that this fulfils a definite economic function, its basis is primarily ceremonial.

(3) *Kumur kätjirk*. A series of very characteristic *gerri*, some of which differ considerably from those made in

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[C177] of the Macassar voyagers which brought iron to Arnhem Land long
[C182] before it was known in what later became the settled country of
431 the Roper River.
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The most interesting feature of this southern movement of spears is the fact that, today, when the position is reversed and when iron is relatively scarce and difficult to obtain in Arnhem Land in contrast with its abundance in the settled country of the Roper River valley, the passage of fine iron spear heads from Blue Mud Bay, which was developed under the impetus of the ceremonial exchange cycle, stimulated by the coming of the Macassar voyagers, still continues, although the practical need for it, the demand for iron spear heads for actual use in the Roper River area, must have passed, or at least must have been much reduced. The fact that the *economic* need which it served has passed, stresses once more the strength of the *ceremonial aspect* of the *kumur märndu* exchange cycle.
[C572] It must be remembered that partners within the ceremonial exchange cycle exist of such long standing that they have even become hereditary. These people send *gerri*, and these must be reciprocated with presents of the type long established by tradition, whether they seem appropriate or not.

Eastern Arnhem Land, come from *ḳumur ḳätjirḳ* 431 across the Liverpool River. *Källämba,* (forehead fillets), 439 *märbät* or *tjänauwo,* (woven "bibs" or aprons), hooked spears of the types *bäḳḳärämma, mat'tji'tji* ("biting bags" used to hold between the teeth in fighting), as well as *bärlatta,* (heavy fighting clubs).

(4) *Kumur djalḳ. ŋämbi lirra,* (*ŋämbi* spear heads), *ḳälli-gälli,* (boomerangs), *ḳai'u,* (chain mesh dilly bags), and *ŋätjin* or *bulnyin,* (opossum fur pubic coverings or aprons made from opossum fur). So a *ŋämbi* spear coming to a Mildjiŋi man of the Glyde River travels from the quarry at ŋillipidji near Blue Mud Bay in Wagilläk territory via the Ritar'ŋo, (a nomadic group of *yiritja* moiety having a big territory in the interior of Arnhem Land).

(5) *Kumur ḳärin,* the chief route by which boomerangs (*ḳälli-gälli*) enter North-eastern Arnhem Land, also provides hooked spears with bamboo shafts of several types made in Central and North Central Arnhem Land; belts of human hair of large ceremonial type—an iron-headed spear of special type known as *lämma* with a very short, broad blade that distinguishes it from *ḳaiyit.* Today (in contrast with former conditions[40]), it yields also *djimindi* (wire for

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[40] The first source of such valued *gerri* as axes, iron, wire, [177 calico and tobacco, for the whole of Arnhem Land, was the visiting 174] fleet from the Celebes or elsewhere in Indonesia, and there is evidence that articles of this order were passed far inland long before there was any settlement in the Northern Territory. But today the order is reversed to some extent and a considerable amount of calico, wool, blankets, axes, iron, wire and fish hooks passes north from the settled cattle country along the *duḳarr* of the ceremonial exchange cycle. When this *gerri* reaches Arnhem Land it is still known as *muadäḳ* because it belongs to the category of objects which came originally from *ḳumur muadäḳ.*

by repeated intervention of the Australian Customs Authorities after Federation. 174 The Indonesian influence in Arnhem Land, therefore, probably extended over a period of nearly two hundred years, perhaps much longer. 177 Although there is no conclusive evidence as to the time when these visits commenced, there is reason for the belief that they occurred over a relatively long period, and a study of the culture shows that the visitors from Indonesia exercised a strong influence on the people. This is apparent in their material culture, and to an even greater extent in their social and ceremonial life and mythology. I have mentioned (page 71, footnote) my surprise at finding in settled country on the Roper River, even before I entered the then isolated country of Arnhem Land, fine iron spear heads from Blue Mud Bay, an area where iron was still difficult to obtain and much coveted. [7 21 The natives of this region have been suspected of attacking *bêche-de-mer* and other craft merely for the iron 325] in the water tanks and trepang boilers, from which, by a laborious process of hammering and grinding, they manufacture fine spear heads. This was in 1935, when I had been [123] sent by the Commonwealth Government to investigate unrest and tribal fighting in Arnhem Land. The people of [648] Caledon and Blue Mud Bays were regarded as warlike and aggressive and were still greatly feared by the natives to the south, with whom they had little contact and who would not have entered their territory.

Subsequent work in Arnhem Land revealed the existence 174 of the great ceremonial exchange cycle which has been 177 431 described in detail on page 67 above. But while the *kumur märnda* relationship exists throughout the whole of Arnhem Land, and while the ceremonial exchange cycle draws *gerri* from far beyond this region, there is evidence for the belief that it was the visits of Macassar voyagers, who

[174] brought articles of great material and social value, which
177 gave a special impetus and furnished the "drive", not only
431 for the circulation of *gerri* over hundreds of miles of
country, but which did much to overcome also the organised "opposition" between clans.

114 These observations contrast strongly with the conclusions
177 of Professor W. Lloyd Warner[48] who states:
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439 "The trade with the Malays seems to have been purely
on a basis of exchange, with very little else in its social content. Nevertheless it had little effect on the aboriginal ideas of trade . . . The native sometimes exchanges things he possesses for the things he needs and cannot get from his own territory . . .

"All this," Warner considers, "again shows the strong resistance of the Murngin culture to outside influence. The Malay trader came for an exchange of goods and nothing else; and it would be thought that, in the hundreds of years he is likely to have been in Arnhem Land, he would have given a new impetus to Murngin ideas of exchange. But as far as can be determined, the Murngin ideas are no different from what they were before he arrived . . ."

And again, after stressing the value of the iron axes brought to this territory by the Malays, Warner says, "It is unlikely that many iron axes ever reached the interior peoples." Of these axes he adds, "The substitution of the iron tomahawk (brought in as an article of trade by the Malays) for the stone axe can be understood, since the iron implement is a far more capable instrument, and a more important reason—the tomahawk was easily acquired and it was not necessary to learn how to make it. There was no arduous labour attached to collecting turtle shell to trade for an axe, for the shell came as a by-product to the pursuit

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[48] W. Lloyd Warner, *A Black Civilisation*, 1937. (pp. 458ff).

of harpooning turtles. The making of the stone axe took 114
time and a considerable amount of hard labour; but to go 177
turtle hunting was a pleasure, since turtle harpooning expe- 431
ditions are not only for the anticipated enjoyment of the 439
flesh and to supply the family larder, but also for the pure joy of stalking the turtle, spearing it, and bringing it home to an admiring audience which could appreciate one's abilities as a hunter and a man of importance. Undoubtedly pride of workmanship is felt by a native axe-maker. His fellow tribesmen always express their appreciation of a well-turned-out axe or spear head, but the social approbation given to the two occupations is completely disproportionate."

And again, in the continued use of the bark canoe by the people of Arnhem Land after the introduction of the *lippa lippa* by the visiting seafarers from the Celebes, Warner sees proof of the conservatism of the aborigine.

"The conservatism of Australian material culture is more or less demonstrated by the persistence of the bark canoe. Even today men who know how to make a dugout with outrigger equipment paddle their bark canoes across the open sea from island to island and from the various points of land . . ."

Professor Warner has missed entirely the tremendous importance of the impact of this Indonesian culture on the ceremonial life of these people in his review of Malay or Macassar contacts with the people of Arnhem Land, from which the above extracts are quoted. And in his remarks on the ease with which the native acquired iron axes, and his comments on the conservatism surrounding the continued use of the bark canoe he tends rather to over-simplification.

There is no justification for the conclusion that the cul- 114
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114 ture of the natives of North-eastern Arnhem Land showed
177 a resistance to the influence of this virile culture from Indonesia, and certainly none for the statement that the ideas of these people were "no different from what they were before he (the Malay seafarer) arrived . . ."

121 I do not propose here to attempt a full review of the in-
177 fluence of the Indonesian culture on the ceremonial life of these people, but merely to show its effect on the ceremonial exchange cycle and the economic system which accompanies it.

177 That this influence was extensive is proved beyond ques-
192 tion by the fact (see pp. 67, 68f) that the term *muadäḳ*,
431 which gives its name to *ḳumur muadäḳ*, the northern sec-
439 tor of the exchange cycle, is the collective or generic name given by the natives to all the *gerri* which they obtained formerly from the Macassar visitors, of which the chief items are knives, axes of the type called *luŋa linya*, nails (for fish hooks etc.), fish hooks and lines, bottle glass (for scrapers), tobacco, smoking pipes (*pämatuḳḳa*), belts, wooden dugout canoes, (*lippa lippa*), beads, (*männi-männi*), and material such as calico, blankets, string and later, wool, to which the collective term *mäthäḳäl* was applied.

114 When Professor Warner contrasts the ease with which an
324 Arnhem Land native acquired an iron axe from the Malays,
135 with the labour involved in the making of the (admittedly)
431 much less efficient and satisfactory stone axe, he overlooks
463 certain important factors. First, that stone axes, like flint spear heads, are made from special stone which occurs only in restricted areas, and that while any man who merely uses an axe to get wild honey, can grind the edge, the implement itself is usually made initially by a craftsman, a specialist in the working of the stone who lives in the country in which it occurs, and like the smooth hard

FROM THE SOCIAL STANDPOINT THE CONSTANT
flow of *muadäk* from the Macassar visitors enabled a man 182
of this area to discharge his obligations to those from whom 431
he had received *gerri*, and to maintain and to build up his 439
prestige. From the economic point of view it had the effect [554]
of stimulating the circulation of *gerri*, of maintaining a
balanced exchange of goods, under cover of what, to the
natives, is the vastly more important social and ceremonial
relationship.

The orientation of the ceremonial exchange system as it 177
still operates, with the emphasis on the "approved" or tra- 182
ditional *gerri* in each *kumur*, leaves no doubt as to the im- 431
petus which the coming of the Indonesians gave to the culture of this area. The people of the coast, who in former times came into direct contact with the Macassar visitors—and in more recent times, with trepang fishermen and casual seafarers—and who have provided the iron, nails, and bottles (for glass scrapers, etc.) for their exchange partners, are named from the special *gerri*, known collectively as *muadäk*, which they send as reciprocal gifts to their partners in the south.

It is not proposed to deal at length with the ceremonial aspect of this infiltration, and a single reference will suffice to show the effect on ceremonial life, which gives weight to the data which has been recorded, and of the value placed upon the *gerri* which were brought by the Macassar seafarers, as well as the effect of this on economic and social life.

The Mildjiŋi clan of the Glyde River has not only come 177
strongly under the influence of these Indonesian people, 431
but among other traits, has adopted a square-faced bottle, 532
called *butulo*, and has elevated it to the level of a clan totem. 778
Today the *mälli*, the representation, "the shade", the non-material representation or effigy of this bottle, is carved laboriously from solid ironwood, and is painted with a

177 sacred totemic design called *tärrupoŋon*—comprising
431 clouds in highly conventionalised form—which the people
532 say were reflected on the wet surface of the old square-
778 faced bottles when they were found, wet and glistening, cast up by the sea. So that for Mildjiŋi, the bottle, which is regarded as part of the heritage from the Macassar visitors, had a double interest. It ranked among *ḳumur muadäḳ gerri* for ceremonial exchange and as an ordinary "*wäḳḳinŋu*" (non-sacred) manifestation of the *butulo*, which mythology tells them was brought, in ancestral times, by the Munäŋa, the Macassar seafarers, and which therefore gives the people a charter for the adoption by Mildjiŋi clan of *butulo* as a ceremonial totem.

114 Here is proof, not only of the recognition of the social
177 value of bottles, which in former times were valued greatly
431 as material for scrapers, but also a refutation of Warner's statement as to the conservatism of Arnhem Land culture and what he has termed the "strong resistance of the Murngin culture to outside influence". The example quoted is only one instance of an influence which has been widespread in Arnhem Land culture.

To suggest that it is unlikely that many of the iron axes which were brought by the Malays would reach the interior people, is to underestimate the dynamic effect of the impact of this virile culture on the people of Arnhem Land. In 1935 I made a long patrol on foot across Arnhem Land, and I remember well seeing, on the wall of a rock shelter, far inland, the drawing of an iron axe of the special type called *luŋa linya*, brought in former times by the Macassar people. At the time I felt some surprise, but this feeling disappeared with the subsequent discovery and understanding of the operation of the ceremonial exchange system

It is probable that under ordinary conditions, if the cir- 182
culation of these axes depended on straight-out exchange 431
or barter, their value to the seafaring peoples of the north 577
and east coasts of Arnhem Land, for the cutting of dugout 438
canoes, would have been such that the people would have parted with them reluctantly. But under the ceremonial exchange system, and the compelling need to build up goodwill and to increase their prestige by the circulation of *gerri*, and especially to make reciprocal gifts for those already received, the people on the sea coast, who received these axes first, must have been compelled to pass many of them rapidly southward to partners in *kumur djalk* and *kumur kärin*. Of this circulation of *gerri* an informant remarked—"I must make road there". It is significant that he used the words "must" and "road". The word "road" my informant translated first as *kumur*, then as *kumur dukarr*—conceiving the movement of *gerri* as so regular and extensive as to make a beaten path or "road", *dukarr*, a conception to which reference was made on page 69 above.

But again it must be remembered that the *social* obligations of the ceremonial exchange cycle, which to the natives are the obvious and vitally important ones, far outweigh the economic exchange which accompanies it, and sometimes persist after the actual need for its *gerri* has passed, as in the case of the iron spear heads from Blue Mud Bay which were passing down to the Roper River long after this area had become settled.

There is little doubt that a ceremonial exchange system 177
existed in Arnhem Land before the coming of the visitors 431
from Indonesia and it is not intended to suggest that the exchange system in this territory depends on the coming of these seafaring visitors. But its orientation at the present time, and its most important "drives" certainly owe much

● 177 to the impact of Indonesian culture. The giving and
431 exchange of gifts, of *gerri*, is an important accompaniment
(602) of much of the ritual that takes place in Arnhem Land and
[182] is an integral part of the behaviour which is obligatory
between relatives of certain orders within the kinship
system. A number of special relationships, of which one,
tjukarŋo, is mentioned on page 75, are also characterised
by the exchange of possessions.

And again, the fact must be stressed that the ceremonial
431 exchange cycle is not merely a matter of exchange or barter,
577 although the economic exchange is a vital accompaniment,
but that a man having once established a place in the
kumur märnda relationship, must reciprocate with the
appropriate *gerri*. As one of my informants said (page 79),
"*Must* I give *wetj*"—"I *must* reciprocate." And again, when
he is offered a gift, a man cannot refuse it—he *must* accept
it—and after holding it for the period permitted by custom,
pass it on to one of his partners. When people of an inland
clan, who are partners in the *kumur djalk* and *kumur kärin*
directions, brought big ceremonial presentations of flint spear
heads, boomerangs, forehead fillets (*källümba*) and large
ceremonial hair belts and other *gerri*, to their exchange partners in *kumur muadäk* the people would have no choice.
They would be obliged to accept the *gerri* brought by the
visitors and to reciprocate. The *gerri* appropriate to each
[183] quarter ~~are~~ defined by tradition, and again, it was stated that
tradition lays down the rule that *gerri* from one *kumur* may
[182] not return to the quarter in which they originated. The
[433] practical effect of this custom would be to make it difficult
for the people of the coast to have a monopoly of iron implements, such as axes, knives, iron spear heads, wire for
fish spears, even if they wished to do so. It would be impossible for them to possess these without the knowledge

of their immediate neighbours who could solicit such *gerri* 182 431
by themselves making substantial ceremonial presentations, 433 577
requiring appropriate return gifts.

The social implication of the *kumur märnda* relationship 177
is such that if the inland people maintain a constant stream 182
of *gerri* to their neighbours to the north, these must be 431 577
reciprocated, with resultant increase in the volume and
tempo of the exchange cycle. It will be evident that under
this system it would be impossible for any man to accumulate,
or to hold permanently, much *gerri*. To do so would
mean to default in his obligations to exchange partners. He
would lose prestige and social status. His social personality
would suffer, which, to these people, would far outweigh
the value of the possessions. The functional importance of
the exchange system and the vital part it plays in the social
and ceremonial life of the people of Arnhem Land, as well
as the stimulus which it must have received through the
coming of the Macassar visitors, is evident. The Macassar
influence is important not merely as a source of the greatly
valued *muadäk*, but also for the incentive which this gave to
the inland groups to send up *gerri* to *kumur muadäk*, which
they knew must be reciprocated with the articles which
they valued, and which were most important to their own
social life and economy. And by no means the least important [619]
feature of the ceremonial exchange cycle was the
part it played in overcoming the effect of the segmentary
organisation, which would tend normally to restrict communication,
a fact to which reference has already been
made.

The facts which have been presented, although they deal 177
with one relationship only, will suffice to show that the 182
influence of the Macassar visitors on the economic life and 431
ceremonial exchange cycle of the natives of Arnhem Land

177 was an important one. It supplied the "drive" for the
182 extensive exchange system which was in part ceremonial,
431 and it furnished the mechanism and the dynamic force under cover of which *gerri* were sent south to discharge obligations set up by receipt of a steady flow of gifts, and so to stimulate reciprocal presentations by creating obligations which must be fulfilled.

Important as were the contributions made by the Indonesian visitors in actual material objects, such as iron for knives and fish hooks, wooden *lippa lippa* and the axes with which to cut canoes and so to augment food supply, their most important contribution was social—in the dynamic effect these things exercised on the social and ceremonial life under cover of which the important, but less obtrusive, economic exchange system has been developed.

754 speak and to hear most of what was said except when it was idiomatic or spoken very quickly, I made the following note: 'The cult of the *kalka* or *ragalk* properly belongs to the area of Arnhem Land extending from the Burara of Cape Stewart westwards. It did not exist as a cult to the east of this territory, although greatly feared by these people, but it was an important influence to the west as well as among the interior tribes, the Raimbar'ngo, the Ritar'ngo and others from the Derby Creek, lying south and west of Cape Stewart and the Liverpool River.'

And to this record, the following significant note was added: 'It was unknown to the Tjambarpoingo, the Kalbanuk and to most of the Mandjikai—the "sandfly people"—with the exception of the Wallamango, the latter a people of the Crocodile Islands who claim affinity with Mandjikai *barpuro*.' Wanguri clan is also linked with the same group. *Barpuro*3 is a term that is difficult to define in the intricate and aberrant social grouping of this area. 617 It is applied in eastern Arnhem Land to loosely integrated clans often occupying discontinuous tracts of territory, geographically sometimes widely separated, but nevertheless having in common at least some vital and significant part of their total totemic heritage.

124 The immense complexity of this social grouping caused many lengthy digressions among informants and frequently interrupted the collection of long texts in the language to enable difficult points as to the bonds between groups to be clarified and the resultant effects upon the attitudes of 754 people made clear to me. Because the cult of the *ragalk* or 184 sorcerer was known to the Yanango of Mooroonga Island in the Crocodile Group—a clan of Maringo *malla*—who were on the borderline between the east and the west, with many cultural differences as well as differences in social organization, the impact of the *kalka* upon them was not as sudden or as destructive as it was upon the people of Elcho Island. My informants stressed the fact that the Ritar'ngo of the interior, who occupied a big area of country lying between the Liverpool River to the north and the Wilton (a tributary of the upper Roper) in the south, knew and practised the cult of the *kalka*, as did their neighbours the Raimbar'ngo.

It will be clear from the foregoing that the two cults, [114] the cults of the *marngit* and the *kalka*, are not generally complementary and do not, as Mr. Webb's account implies, occur together among the same people, with the possible exception of the Yanango and Wallamango and the neighbouring Burara. But the Yanango and Wallamango are marginal groups and this has an important influence upon their attitudes towards certain culture traits, and the emphasis placed upon differences tends to exaggerate these.

786 The more or less benevolent *marngitmirri*, the typical medicineman, a kind of general practitioner, with his spirit familiars, is characteristic of the region east of the Crocodile Islands, extending to Cape Arnhem, where the cult of the 777 *ragalk* does not exist.

754 I have stated that prior to the transfer of the Mission 177 from Elcho Island west to the Crocodile Group, the people 184 of the Tjambarpoingo (*dua* moiety) and Kopapoingo-

[p.98(B)]

797 speaking groups of Elcho Island, the Glyde and Goyder
754 Rivers on the west, and eastwards around Buckingham,
Arnhem and Melville Bays, to Cape Arnhem and Port
[177 Bradshaw and south to Caledon and Blue Mud Bays, had
184] little actual experience of the sinister cult of the *kalka*. But
when the Methodist Mission moved from Elcho Island to
the Crocodile Group and set up its headquarters at Milingimbi, an island lying a short distance off the coast, it
brought the people who had accompanied the Mission
into the very stronghold of a form of secret killing or
sorcery that was strange to them. On this account they
609 came to regard the people of the west—whom they called
186 *wamba*, strangers—with fear and suspicion, and they have
been more or less at loggerheads with them ever since,
[152] resulting in frequent blood feuds, and a considerable loss
of life.

For years it was the practice of the natives who had moved from their own countries to the island of Milingimbi, into what was to them foreign and hostile territory, to discourage visits of the local people by acts of aggression and violence, depending on the Mission to protect them from reprisals.

797 Mr. Webb, who was in charge of the Methodist Mission
in the Crocodile Islands, once informed me, when I was at
728 Milingimbi during a brief respite from patrols on the
722 mainland of Arnhem Land, that in the early days of the
Mission there he had once, to maintain peace, bought all
their fighting spears from the natives, but that when an
attack from the mainland was reported to be imminent he
had had to re-issue these—though in actual fact the attack
609 did not occur.

186 As often occurs when a people are brought into contact
with those of a different culture, the natives from the east
tended to exaggerate traits of the Burara that they regarded
[582] as undesirable and often told me ribald stories stressing the
misdeeds of their neighbours. After a long recital of the
faults of the Burara, whom he stigmatized as *wamba*, one
informant remarked by way of special emphasis, '*yappa
lukka!*'—they cohabit with their sisters. The brother-sister
[835 tabu is rigidly enforced in east Arnhem Land. Even to
684] mention the name of a woman in the presence of her
brother is a grave ritual offence, called *mirriri*, and brother-sister incest is a crime for which there is no expiation,
punished by the death of both parties.

582 The charge of incest against the Burara may owe its
835 origin to the fact that these people, unlike their neighbours
to the east, had a normal tribal organization, which meant
that members of clans of opposite moieties within the
tribe and of the appropriate kinship status could marry,
since the tribe is not exogamous. Because people between
582 whom marriage was permitted were actually members of
835 the same tribe, the practice would suggest incest to their
neighbours of the east, already fearful of the magic of their
152 *kalka* and ready to attribute to these people practices that
186 were to them anti-social and unnatural. This attitude of the
Elcho Island people was well shown by the fact that they
charged their neighbours with cannibalism and said of
[266] them '*nganak lukka*'—they eat flesh (human)—overlooking
the fact that they themselves also practised a form of ritual

[p. 99(A)]

Preface

ARNHEM LAND! Here fish climb trees, the sun sets in green 000
fire and women hoard human skulls. It is the home of Stone
Age man who shaves his head, and dismembers and bakes a [266]
body before eating it to absorb warrior-strength. The witch- 755
doctor is supreme and treats fevers by massaging, pummelling
and sucking gravel, blood, and animal bones from
dumbfounded patients. Beside the backwaters of the untamed
north, Stone Age nomads continue their ageless life
and timeless practices.

Little is known of the Australian aboriginal except that in 174
the Stone Age he broke away or was driven out from the rest
of the human race and wandered to Australia. He possessed
a continent at the cost of becoming isolated from the rest of
the human race. Other nomadic hunters evolved into
pastoralists or agriculturists but the aboriginal was denied
normal development, for neither Stone Age nomad nor
modern scientist has succeeded in adapting indigenous food-plants
to everyday needs, and no Australian animal has [231]
been domesticated—as Dr Gilruth once succinctly remarked:
'You can't ride a wallaby or milk a wombat.'

Aboriginal development was not stimulated by the white 177
man and his nineteenth-century civilization. As early as
1860, the explorer McDouall Stuart built his cairn, marked
his tree, and recorded: 'I am now camped in the centre of
Australia; I have marked a tree and planted the British
flag there. We gave three cheers for the flag, the emblem of
civilization, religion, and liberty, and may it be a sign to the
natives that the dawn of liberty, civilization, and Christianity
is about to break on them.' But every pioneer was not a
Stuart, and as Dr Madigan says: 'What did break on the

[p vi is blank]

● 177 Aborigines could never be mistaken for liberty, civilization, and Christianity.' Early settlers appropriated everything of value, and when they came into contact with aborigines and their Stone Age beliefs and customs, they could not appreciate their complex social organization and fanatical regard for ancient hunting-grounds and sacred sites. Hence the clashes and feuds of pioneering days.

Aboriginal depopulation was not entirely due to punitive
[165] measures and to introduced diseases, for Stone Age man continued to die whenever he came into contact with modern man. In 1820 the British Government granted ten thousand acres at Port Macquarie as an aboriginal reserve; a mission-
[097] ary worked there for seventeen years, but by that time the people were extinct and the reserve was abandoned. A realistic missionary of that day wrote: 'Judging from present appearances, by the time the missionary shall have acquired the language so as to preach the Gospel he will have no one to preach to.'

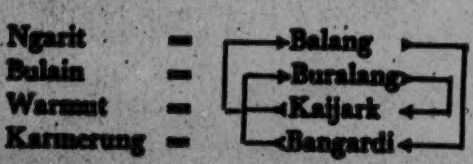
165 In less than a century-and-a-half the full-blood aboriginal
177 population of Australia declined to fifty thousand, and the majority of these exist in unwanted or poverty-stricken areas of the continent. All who have had the good fortune to see the unspoiled remnants of this, the oldest of all living races, are puzzled by this decrease in population, and vague suggestions of racial suicide through crude forms of abortion make one ask increasingly: 'Why will they not propagate?' and 'Why do they lose the will to live?' It is a racial tragedy, this diminishing of a people who traversed the hemispheres before the days of the pyramids, this crumbling of a social organization as old as gregarian man, this dissolution of a race too old to be classified with any modern race, but so human that any existing race could have evolved from them.

131 However, they are not all dead—yet! In isolated parts of
657 north and north-west Australia nomads roam the bush and rugged mountains of large Reserves. Arnhem Land is the

my father both belong to another subsection; further, my 617 mother's brother's children and my father's sister's children belong to one group, whereas the children of the cross-cousins of my parents are divided amongst two other groups. In these tribes, too, the rules prohibit marriage with one's own cross-cousins (mother's brother's daughter or father's [582] sister's daughter), but allow marriage with the daughters of certain of the cross-cousins of one's parents. Therefore, the subsection or group which includes these possible spouses is the wife subsection, whereas the other one, the cross-cousin subsection, must be regarded differently.

It used to be said that the main function of this eight-subsection system was to separate one's first (cross) cousins whom one must not marry from those second cousins whom one could marry, and that the system would not make sense in a tribe which allowed marriage with mother's brother's daughter. 617 582 177 However, the Aborigines are the best judges of that. The subsection system came to them at intertribal meetings; they considered it to be of practical value, and being also interested in its totemic and ceremonial aspects, they adopted it. In doing so they modified its principle of descent in the male line, so as to fit in with marriage with [611] mother's brother's daughter. The result, briefly put, is that instead of a man and his son's son belonging to the same subsection, a series of four subsections is gone through before a man and his direct descendant belong to the one group—that is, a man is grouped with his son's son's son's son.

The actual subsection terms used in the region are: 617



Ngarit = Balang
Bulain = Buralang
Warmut = Kaijark
Karmerung = Bangardi

The sign = connects intermarrying pairs of subsections, 617 persons who in many cases are cross-cousins (mother's brother's children or father's sister's children) to one another; and the arrows connect the subsections of mother and child.

By following the table it will be seen that a Ngarit man marries a Balang woman and his son belongs to Bangardi. Likewise, Bangardi marries a Karmerung woman and has a Bulain son. So too, a Bulain man's son is Kaijark, and a Kaijark man's son is back to Ngarit. In the same way, Balang man's son is Karmerung, whose son is Buralang, whose son is Warmut, whose son is back into the Balang subsection.

616 These two male lines (or cycles) of descent are interesting for another reason. Before the north-east Arnhem Land natives adopted the subsection system, they possessed what Mr Chaseling refers to as two moieties, Dua and Yiritcha, the dual organization. This division, which is social and ceremonial in function, runs through the whole community, dividing it into two groups, membership of which is determined by descent in the male line. [611] Moreover, Dua peoples must marry Yiritcha peoples and vice versa. This means that a man and his children, his son's children, and those of his son's son and son's son's son, all belong to the same moiety, whereas the wives and husbands of these persons all belong to the other moiety.

616
617
177 Then came the eight subsection system, which the natives adjusted to their kinship grouping and marriage rules, and, with as great facility, to their moiety organization. One series or cycle of four subsections, each related to the preceding one as child to father (that is, patrilineally), was equated to one moiety, and the other series to the other. Thus, the Yiritcha moiety consists of the Ngarit-Bangardi-Bulain-Kaijark-Ngarit cycle, and the Dua moiety of the Balang-Karmerung-Buralang-Warmut-Balang cycle. The result is that when a Ngarit man, who incidentally must be

a member of the Yiritcha moiety, marries his mother's 177
brother's daughter, he is marrying a woman of the Balang 616
subsection and Dua moiety, and also of a local clan different 617
from his own, as will be shown later.

This is possibly somewhat confusing to the reader, and to all who do not possess an understanding of aboriginal social organization. But I can vouch for the fact that the system is intelligible and quite logical, and those who tend to regard the Aborigines as a low type, or of poor intelligence, must reconcile that opinion with the fact that the north-east Arnhem Land Aborigines not only understand the system, and make it work in everyday life, but that they adjusted this new grouping to their own kinship and marriage rules and to their dual organization.

I have enlarged on this matter, not only to give some idea 181
of the background of behaviour in the region, but also to suggest that in matters of importance to themselves, the Aborigines are just as intelligent and logical as we are. It is our ignorance of their world of thought which often causes us to regard them as low in the scale of intelligence, when, as a matter of fact, we are not acting very intelligently in judging them without a thorough knowledge of the facts.

The Aborigines and their Country

Here and there Mr Chaseling mentions hordes and sacred 619
wells. This introduces us to the fundamental unit of the 614
social and even 'political' organization. The tribe as an organization of clans or hordes does not really exist in this region. Instead there are a number of local groups, each occupying on the average about 360 square miles of country, loosely bound together by the fact that they possess in common certain features of social organization, for example, the kinship system, marriage rule, eight-subsection system, and the dual organization (or division of the community into two groups for certain ceremonial and social purposes);

nonchalantly remarked that when bush-rats spoiled most of 797
the stores, they bartered fish, wallaby, and lily-seeds from nomads.

We saw white-washed aboriginal cottages built from locally burnt shell-lime, stones and ant-bed that had been standing for twenty years. Weird outlines of hands were in a number of bark huts, and an old nomad explained that when they 'go bush' they leave the mark of a hand in the
house of a friend. Imprints are made by chewing moistened [201]
clay and spraying it from the mouth over a hand outstretched on the bark. When the hand is removed its outline remains in the centre of the white clay.

Indifferent land had been cultivated, and in good seasons
yielded tapioca, sweet-potatoes, coconuts, and bananas. [241]
Nomads work in the gardens during the wet season and also
collect bêche-de-mer from the mud-flats for export. Women [226]
weave baskets, fans, and trays from wild pandanus palm, [439]
and these are marketed for them by the mission. [285]

At Goulburn Island I met some of the young Fijians who work on all these stations. Kolinio was a giant, a carpenter by trade and the son of a chief. He introduced me to the satisfying juice of the green coconut by gashing a lip in the soft shell of a green nut and handing it to me brimming with cold, exquisitely flavoured liquid. It has been inadequately
likened to cold lemonade. Fijians get on well with [177]
aborigines and perhaps their colour is a link rather than a bar. They are born agriculturists, but need to unlearn a lot when they come from their fertile islands to desolate monsoonal Arnhem Land.

Milingimbi was at that time the end of the lugger trip. It is one of the many low scrub-covered islands and mud-flats known as the Crocodile Islands, yet within thirty miles of
Milingimbi there is the densest Yulengor population in [161]
Arnhem Land. In 1918 this mission was begun as an extension of that at Goulburn Island. The advance seems

running away, and two youths chased him into the jungle. 628
One of them threw a spear which cut off his ear, and a 682
second went through him. The avengers shouted to the 684
horde, and one by one the men plunged their spears into the body and left it there, exposed and deliberately mutilated.

It was after midnight when the men finished this story of 000
stark Stone Age justice, and I left them on the beach to return to the lugger to switch on a portable radio for an assurance that this was actually the twentieth century.

The rest of the trip was boisterous, with head winds and 177
heavy seas, till we entered Port Bradshaw and beached the boat for repairs. Long ago, Macassar traders fished here for trepang, and East Indian tamarind trees fringing the shoreline marked their camps. I came across a curious formation of stones, and could make nothing of it till months later I read in Matthew Flinders's diary that in 1803 he saw similar formations in Blue Mud Bay. He could not solve the riddle till he met the Macassars in the English Company's Islands, where Pobasso, their chief, told him that the Malays had made the stone fireplaces to boil and cure their bêche-de-mer.

Bêche-de-mer is known locally by its Macassar name of
trepang. Scientifically it is termed *Echinodermata* or 'Spiny-
skinned'; seven hundred species are known to exist, and the [136]
few varieties in Australia range from nine to eighteen inches in length. They are rough skinned and look like lumps of rubber or bread rolls, with ridged bands extending around the entire length. Trepanging is the oldest industry in Australia, for it seems to have been at its height soon after Captain Cook landed at Botany Bay. Malay traders gathered it for the Chinese market. It must be cured for export, and the process is much the same as that used by the Malays. It is gutted, boiled in a strong solution of mangrove bark and sea-water, smoked over a slow fire, dried in the
sun, and bagged. Chinese regard it as a delicacy and [262]

177 appreciate it, particularly during their New Year festivals,
262 but nomads will not eat the product, and their half-starved dingoes turn from it.

648 At Caledon Bay we walked over the scene of the then recent Japanese massacre. In 1933 the Asiatics came to fish for bêche-de-mer, and nomads told me that they landed near the aboriginal camp and went from one family to another offering handfuls of tobacco in return for women. Tobacco makes an almost irresistible appeal to nomads, but they surlily refused to trade, though the tobacco so tantalizingly near made them moody and irritable. Trouble was still brewing some days later, when the Japanese established their camp and employed nomads to collect firewood for the trepang fires. It is said that an Asiatic threw a piece of damper at a Yulengor for refusing to work, and thereby brought the trouble to a head; for even if they are desperately poor, nomads are extremely sensitive to a slight. Their spears were hidden in the sand, and they speared the Japanese so that only one escaped by diving into the sea and swimming to a nearby headland. Spears punctured the surface as he swam underwater, but he out-witted his pursuers by ingeniously breaking the head off a spear and clasping it under his arm as he fled into the bush. His ruse worked, and pursuing Yulengor said: 'Leave him, he has the spear through him and will soon be dead.' Days later, he arrived at Milingimbi, two hundred miles away, lacerated, exhausted and naked, and missionaries later took him to Darwin. He took the first boat to Japan.

797 No suitable site for a station could be found in Caledon Bay, so we returned to Yirrkala near Cape Arnhem. It had
[133] an exposed anchorage and poor soil, but it also had fresh water, an elevated building-site and clean beaches. We decided to establish the station there.

By the middle of November, timber had been cut and

CHAPTER THREE

Early Days and Strange Contacts

797 177 MANY small hordes came to Yirrkala within a few weeks of our arrival and set up their camps on the beach. I found I had a lot to learn from them before presuming to teach. Curiosity had lured them to the station where this white family had come with the unheard-of intention of living permanently in their country and growing food where food had never been found. Some of them had not met a white man, and seeing a white woman was a new experience for most of them.

Their habits, customs and beliefs were separated from ours by a thousand generations, and they could not understand our equipment and tools; agricultural implements, fencing wire, carpenter's and blacksmith's tools were of no greater significance to them than our small wireless set for receiving and transmitting messages to our nearest neighbours one hundred and fifty miles away. They understood that this wireless enabled us to communicate with the outside world, and as a test case Marupla asked me to 'wireless' and tell his friends to come in from Caledon Bay! A few days later there was rumour of a killing in a distant horde, and when I asked how the news had come, one man nonchalantly remarked: 'Oh, might be wireless.'

[757] Medicines were readily accepted, the most popular being a cough mixture with a liquorice and golden syrup base, which was always in demand for cuts and bruises! Patented tablets made their usual appeal, and doubtless influenced most aches and pains, at least by suggestion.

737 464 We offered the Yulengor employment in clearing the

797 beast represented a potential feast. Tailing stock, and protecting
185 them from dingoes whilst they grazed, was a foreign
231 idea to Stone Age hunters, and if they were not watched,
they would build each day a rough brushwood yard in the
bush to prevent the stock wandering off for grass and water.
Meanwhile the herdsman slept in the shade, and at sundown
he brought the animals back to the station yards.

797 With two hundred nomads on the station, a simple system
of sanitation was soon necessary. In the bush they never
[514] bother about this, for they live in small hordes, and camp in
one place only long enough to eat the meagre food supply,
and then move elsewhere. I have never seen Yulengor
deliberately wash themselves, but they are so often in the
[515] water after fish or crossing creeks and swamps, that they do
sometimes get wet. Their cleansing agents are sand and
ashes in which they sleep and lounge, and these are fairly
effective in removing body moisture and dirt. The predominating
[147] acrid odour in their hair, dillybags, and shelters
comes mostly from the blinding smoke in which they cook,
eat, and sleep.

797 Unfortunately most nomads take too readily to wearing
291 left-off clothes. We did all we could to control the craze,
177 and issued free soap and a yard of brightly coloured cloth
to the men, and short skirts to the women. Our chief
objection to the use of clothing is that it is passed from one
[296] to another, never washed, and when wet is allowed to dry
on the body, thereby causing colds and pneumonia. Bush
Yulengor wear nothing unless it be an occasional piece of
bark or bunch of leaves attached to a waist-string. But
when traders and adventurers introduced coloured cloth,
blankets, and left-off clothing, they were eagerly acquired
as ornaments, passed from one to another, worn till they fell
to pieces, and except for accidental immersion, were never
washed. Strange clothes have been seen, as when a man was
[439] seen in camp dressed in lady's floral Japanese pyjamas

bartered from a passing lugger. In church, the situation got 797
out of control when a bearded nomad came in dressed only 291
in a lady's pair of waist-to-knee pink drawers acquired in [439]
Darwin and bartered for over five hundred miles. [177]

With refreshing independence older Yulengor remained aloof from the fashion of wearing clothes. Daughters of Wonggu, the husband of twenty-odd wives and father of many children, advised him to don a covering, but he naïvely remarked: 'Why should I wear clothes? There's nothing wrong with me; I have nothing to hide.' He walks about as Nature made him, except for two strands of bush
string tied round his waist. When I asked him why he wore [755]
the string, he told me it was for chronic back-ache.

It seemed only reasonable at Yirrkala to preserve Yulengor 797
culture, to encourage the revival of old ceremonies, and to stimulate in the people an appreciation of their own social organization which often has suffered from alien contact. It is unjust for any alien to come amongst primitive people for the purpose of upsetting their mode of life and converting them to living and thinking as he does; and there is no one so pathetic as a detribalized aboriginal. He is adrift from his own society and cannot fully enter into the alien social life he apes. However, it is not to be expected that all the Yulengor customs are harmless and worthy of a place in their social life; some practices lend themselves to development, but others, such as infanticide, have nothing to be said in
their favour. The birth of twins is rare, but if it occurs, the 845
mother or a relative kills one at birth or soon afterwards. 797
We were told that one of twins in a Yirrkala camp was to be 847
killed, and upon inquiry learned that superstition was the driving force behind the custom. It is true that in the bush a mother can scarcely feed herself and one child, and that if she has two infants then at least three lives are endangered; so it seems probable that infanticide was introduced in past ages because of economic necessity. But as time went on,

797 845 847 the birth of twins came to be regarded as an ill-omen to be removed only by killing one of them. The establishment of a station, with its agriculture and food resources, removed the original cause of infanticide, and it became more than justifiable to discourage the practice.

797 595 Polygamy also can never be met by alien dictate, though unfortunately it is a persistent 'red herring', and some reformers have attempted to establish monogamy within a few years. In one instance, old much-married men each brought one wife to the station and then established bush camps about half a mile away in the scrub for their other wives and children. I never deliberately suggested monogamy to Yulengor; but of course they realized that I had one wife whilst some of them had three, eight, a dozen, or even more, and they talked about the poverty of my house and discussed with me the practices of a Christian community. Apparently the matter ended there; but after four or five years amongst them, I wondered if a change was not coming too suddenly when several of the younger men
[177] told me that they intended having only one wife each. This revolutionary change can be effected, when they are ready for it and want it, without serious disruption, for men may pass over their 'promised' wives to young, unmarried brothers who stand in the same tribal relationship of 'husband' to the women.

421 Again, aborigines are reputed to be pilferers; but their outlook is so totally different from ours that they cannot be judged by our codes. In their world of nomadism they innocently pick up and use whatever takes their fancy; everything edible is there for eating, and they roam at will with all their possessions in their hands. If a nomad finds another man's canoe in a bay or creek, he feels quite at liberty to make full use of it, paddling it away for perhaps twenty miles before leaving it for the owner to recover.
[177] Into this ancient world of the nomad came the foreign

trepanger, trader, scientist, and missionary with peculiar 421
and unheard of ideas, and with theories of personal posses- 177
sions, which they decline to share, although living in an aboriginal community based on reciprocal sharing and exchanging, in which all are relations.

These two systems have been clashing for one hundred and seventy years, and while some pioneers and traders have resorted to force and compulsion, others have reasoned and explained their attitude to property and the necessity for respecting personal possessions. But whatever methods have been adopted to instil in the aboriginal a new regard for private property, he retains his ancient, instinctive, and characteristic attitude of innocently using whatever takes his fancy.
A missionary once told me he had shut a youth in a tool shed 797
for continued pilfering, but that each night he climbed out 177
through the gable, spent the night in camp with his friends, 421
and was back in detention next morning, ready for breakfast and official release. On another station the missionary pointed to a roomy wooden hut under a shady tamarind tree, and said that it had been put there as a warning to deter pilfering from the gardens. Eventually, with due ceremony, a Yulengor was locked up, but he burrowed his way out through the sandy floor and made nocturnal visits to his friends. By morning he was back in place with the hole filled in, and ready for food, tobacco, and a sleep during the day. In the following wet season he claimed the building for himself and family and proceeded to camp in it.

Trepangers made seasonal visits to Arnhem Land, and 177
property rights were argued with spears and rifles. At the 648
first hint of trouble these fishermen sailed away, and their 421
obvious precautions were not lost on nomads, who realized that they were feared and developed lugger-raiding propensities.

Apart from the desirability of exercising some control over 797
warlike hordes, a simple code of law and order was necessary

YULENGOR

224 I found their methods of kangaroo hunting to be the most
interesting of all, and I know the men would agree with this
estimate. Kangaroos are comparatively easy prey during the
wet season, when long grass covers the hillsides. A hunter
[302] often smears white clay over his head, for clay is an effective
camouflage, and a man so daubed is scarcely distinguishable
from burnt-off tree stumps with their occasional unburnt
patches of white. The big hunt is carefully planned, and
there are intricate methods for driving, ambushing, and
trapping kangaroos when the rains are over and the herbage
is dry. Wide valleys or plains are selected for the hunt, and
[372] a patch is burnt out in the centre. Meanwhile, three or four
men run a wide circle of fire around the burnt-out area, and
hunters with spears and firesticks light many fires inside the
outer wall of smoke and gradually close in toward the centre,
leaving behind them a wall of roaring flames and blinding
smoke which terrifies and drives all the small animals,
reptiles, and kangaroos into the central death-trap where
they are speared.

225 Most Arnhem Land Yulengor hunt for sea-food both on
shore and from canoes. Metal has been filtering into the
● [177] country for two centuries, and this has made hunting easier.
[411] Once they fished with pronged hardwood spears and made
wooden harpoons for the soft-skinned green turtle, dugong,
[325] and porpoise, but they now grind metal harpoons that are
able to pierce even the hard carapace of the shell-back
turtle. For turtle hunting, a harpoon is tied to bush rope and
[411] fitted into the end of a long spear haft, and when a turtle is
sighted on the surface the canoe is paddled quietly toward
it with a man standing in the bow ready for the strike.

Dugong are hunted at night, and canoes skim around the
sea-grass feeding-grounds till an animal is sighted and harpooned.
The flesh resembles pork, and the animals sometimes
measure up to twelve feet in length and weigh half a
136 ton. A dugong suckles her calf while clasping it to her with

vicinity of the speaker and 'limeru' includes everybody, far 193
and wide, such as the human race.

Stone Age men have little use for numbers, for they have 802
so little to count. If a definite number is used at all, it is usually under five. Fingers are the theoretical basis for counting, and one is 'wonggain'; two 'marrama'; three is two plus one; four is two and two; five is known as a hand, 'korng'. Six is hand plus one, and so on to ten, which is two hands, 'korng-marrama'. When pidgin is in use, the [198]
numerals are one to five, and after that it is 'big mob'.

Aboriginal languages are 'alive' and are being altered to 197
meet new needs and conditions. Many new words have 192
been absorbed as a result of the Macassars trading here, and so complete has been the acceptance and use of these terms, that the oldest nomads, some of whom travelled to Macassar [177]
on the trading proas, do not readily recognize their origin. With the advent of white traders, the Yulengor began to assimilate English words, and at Yirrkala I found a boy called Deamer (steamer) and a girl Giggerat (cigarette). [551]
Soap is 'jope', scissors are 'thither', razor is 'yeezer', cockroach 'karkrartj', and from one end of the country to the other, flying fox has been corrupted to 'bailanbok'. A nomad can do no other than reckon the hours of the day by the sun, [805]
and as a consequence, clocks and watches are also known as sun, 'wolu'.

'Dimit-dimirr' is the word for barbed fronds on the pandanus palm, as well as for thorny trees and spiky anemones, but now it is given to introduced lemon trees and barbed wire. 'To swim' is 'waitun' and to this they add the suffix 'mirry', something like our suffix 'ful', meaning 'full of', and the resultant 'waitunamirry' becomes a boat's propellor. 'Kurrta', denoting fire, firewood, or smoke, now serves for an engine, and 'kurrtamirry', full of fire, is a shotgun or rifle. Any law is 'rorm', and the verb 'to give' is 'gurrpan', so that to teach something is 'rormgurrpan',

only did he identify the killers by relationship signs, but said 202
that only one body had been recovered and that the killers
had escaped to their own country near Arnhem Bay.

Undoubtedly this sign-language has been used in silently 201
planning and directing well-organized attacks that bewildered [521]
marauding traders and took police parties by
surprise. Attempts have been made to prove that messages [202]
have been tapped out on musical clapsticks, but clapsticks
are used only for a limited number of timings in songs. [533]
Full details and the signal for attack have been given unobtrusively
in sign-language by merely flicking the hands.

Just as the spoken language is a living one, so the sign- 201
language is being extended to include developments from 177
contact with foreigners. Reference to police is made by placing the wrists side by side and holding them in front to suggest handcuffs. Macassar proas and sailing-boats are indicated by stretching an arm forward, clenching the hand, and raising the thumb for a mast; a boat captain by closing the hands, as on a wheel, and swaying from the hips as when heaving on a helm. A white man's sign is in bending the elbows, sweeping the hands to the breasts and then downwards and outwards; his gun in bending the head to the right, squinting along an imaginary barrel held in the left hand, and drawing the right trigger hand backwards. Wiping a crooked forefinger along the lips refers to tobacco; cattle or tinned meat are denoted by placing a closed hand on either temple and extending the forefingers to look like horns.

I took Burramurra to Darwin for medical attention, and after a few days' treatment I brought him from hospital. He attracted some attention by his awkward gait, and another nomad waved his hands and looked questioningly toward us, till Burramurra answered him with laughter and further hand movements. He told me he had just been asked if he had been drinking whisky and where had he got it?

FAMILY LIFE IN THE JUNGLE

Theories of conception and birth have been severely 842
jolted in recent years, for until recently it was not known that [177]
intercourse had any connection with conception, and
Yulengor regarded it as being merely a natural and satisfying [831]
function. There are no virgins in aboriginal society, for at
an early age a girl is handed over to her husband and is
married for the rest of her life. In parts of western Arnhem [574]
Land, when hordes gather for ceremonies, their hosts provide [837]
them with food and also advance their wives for the visitors'
well-being. The question of illegitimate children does not [848]
arise, for births are thought to be the work of a spirit.

At some time when the potential father is hunting, the 842
spirit of his prospective child comes to him and presents him 787
with a large fish or turtle and enables him to spear it. Not
yet comprehending the omen, the man returns to camp with
the spirit at heel, and when all are asleep this spirit enters the
mother and begins its preparations for birth. In a variation
of this belief, the spirit follows the mother when she goes for
water, and jumps into the water so as to enter the woman.
When a man knows that his wife is to become a mother he
endeavours to recall some unusual experience that has
befallen him in hunting. His mind dwells on any large fish
he has caught, perhaps in the last month, or maybe several
years previously, and he regards this incident as marking
the coming of the spirit-child.

Half-caste children compelled a readjustment of these 842
ideas. First it was assumed that eating the white man's food 177
or the wearing of white clothing caused white-skinned
offspring. An anthropologist, visiting an Arnhem Land
mission station at the invitation of a missionary of irreproachable
character, asked an aboriginal why his normal
full-blood son had a light skin. The father's startling reply
was: 'The child's mother works in the missionary's house.'

According to a revised and popular birth theory, inter- 842
course is necessary only as an act of preparation. In itself [833]

602 miles away and belong to a horde of hereditary enemies.

602 177 Yulengor imagine that white people belong to tribal groups similar to their own, and that everyone in them is related. They were incredulous, and thought we were joking, when we told them that there were thousands of white folk whom we had never seen, and that my wife and I had not known each other until shortly before we were married, and that our marriage was of our own choice and freewill.

A government medical officer, accompanied by a lady, came by plane to inspect the station, and Yulengor women asked my wife to explain the relationship between the airman and his passenger, for they had heard that she was not his wife. It was beyond their understanding that the visitors were not related, and they asked repeatedly if the lady were his sister, wife, or daughter. Finally their outraged sense of fitness was satisfied when my wife said that the lady was the sister-in-law of another government officer. This explanation was greeted with murmurs of relief, and they concluded that as all government officers must be 'brothers', one man's wife stood in the tribal relationship of 'wife' to all the other government 'brothers', and all her sisters would be similarly related to them.

582 A man marries his tribal wife, 'galei', and ordinarily she is his mother's brother's daughter. But all the daughters of a mother's brother are a man's 'galei', and if he is fortunate he may marry all of them, but if there are other tribal brothers who stand in an identical relationship with these 'galei', it is unlikely that one man will obtain them all.

601 As a name, 'galei' is used not only for tribal wives, but also in ordinary conversation; a man applies this term to his own wives' brothers, his brothers' wives and paternal first cousins' wives. There are two dozen similar terms, and some of them cover as many as sixteen different types of relatives, that are as distant as the four varieties of galei. Others are

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Arts, Crafts, and Camp-Songs

325 A STONE AGE hunter, in nature's garb, carrying a handful of hunting spears, stood looking at the sparks from my forge. He was in from the hills behind Caledon Bay, and pointing to a short length of metal lying by the anvil, he said: 'Please give me iron.' He wanted it for a spearhead. A week later I saw the finished weapon. With infinite patience he had pounded it with percussion stones and an old tomahawk, then ground and smoothed it till it had a razor-like edge and a surface with neither dent nor ripple.

Not having discovered the use of metals for himself, the nomad lives in the Stone Age; though why this should be so, when Australia is rich in ores, is another of the mysteries of this race. Tools-of-trade have not developed beyond the Stone Age; they are still chipped from stone, sharp shells, bone, and wood, and with these crude implements the nomads supply their simple needs of spears, dilly-bags, string, beautifully painted and decorated totems, armlets, waist-bands, and corselets.

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177 However, these materials are now giving way to introduced metals. First knowledge of metal came in the seventeenth century, when European sailors visited the coast of Arnhem Land and brought aborigines into touch with metal weapons. Macassars, white traders, Japanese, adventurers, and missionaries have since visited this coastline, and of all their possessions the nomads prize most their knives, axes, and metal ware. Luggers have been raided and wrecks burnt for the metal in them. Trepang fishermen brought old railway lines to support fish-curing boilers, and when these were later discarded it was not beyond aboriginal

ingenuity to cut and pound them into spear-heads, knives, 325
and digging-bars. The majority of spears in Arnhem Land 177
are now made from some kind of metal. Galvanized water- [411]
piping, and copper and brass fittings from wrecks, are
pounded into shape; discarded fuel drums are beaten into
knives and spears; nails from floating boxes are sharpened
and bent into fishing hooks and harpoons.

Spears are frequently broken, lost, or given away, and 411
consequently nomads are always looking for new spear-hafts.
At least twenty varieties are made from wood and stone;
the horror in primitive warfare is a spearhead made from a [237]
bunch of stingray barbs. Old-time fighting and hunting
spears are cut from twelve-foot strips of hardwood and are [322]
shaved and smoothed with shells and sharp stones. Spears
are seldom naturally straight; the kinks are eliminated by
passing them backwards and forwards through a fire. Later
they are painted and stabbed upright in the sand beside
a wind-break, where they are ready for instant use.

In emergencies spears are made very quickly from the simplest materials. I remember we had a rough trip in heavy seas and blinding rain, till we found shelter behind the Wessel Island, where the boys went ashore to hunt for food. Spears had been washed overboard, and I wondered how they intended to hunt. About dusk they returned with two stingrays and a small shark. I asked how they had caught them, and I was told simply: 'I dived and caught them in my hands.' When the fish were cooking on the coals, the young hunter turned his attention to a few rusty nails in a piece of driftwood; he removed them and straightened them in his teeth. He tied them to the end of a straight stick, and called it a spear. Next morning he caught four two-pound fish with his stick and nails.

Spears are thrown from a 'mangal' or spear-thrower, a

776 power behind totem centres, and human spirits created and
775 received again in Buralkor by him after death.

It soon becomes obvious that to arrive at an understanding
771 of the nomad, and to win his complete confidence, there
773 must be an appreciation of his religion. His religion runs down through his secret life to everyday arts and crafts, which were all given him by the Junkgowa and determines even his methods of food-gathering and cooking. All these things are done in a particular manner, because the Junkgowa so instituted them. In the network of the nomad's life the simplest of activities are linked to his highest beliefs and noblest aspirations. They stand or fall together, and no part of his habits and customs can be tampered with without the risk of doing violence to the entire structure of his life and culture. An effective approach to the nomad can be made only on the basis of religion; that is, by an appreciation of his habits, outlook, and philosophy of life. Be a man trader, adventurer, or missionary, he will find a ready welcome if he is prepared to respect their laws, both common and sacred, which are all interwoven and rest on ancient Junkgowa creation myths.

Several old men were talking together and invited me to
177 join them. One of them said: 'We like those stories of Jesus
797 that you tell us: He is the white man's Junkgowa. Our Junkgowa came from Wangarr and we can see now that, in the same way, Jesus is the white man's Junkgowa.' It was instantly clear that they accepted Jesus as the equal of their Junkgowa—and no more. If such an estimate were accepted it would preclude any development in their outlook, aspiration, and custom. I suggested to these primitive philosophers that many Junkgowa had taught the white man, although they went by the name of 'prophets'. Second, their teachings were incomplete and vague till God the Eternal Spirit, known to aborigines as Wangarr, sent His Son Jesus to complete the revelation. Because of the

teachings of Jesus, much prophetic teaching was superseded; 177
and the Christian Church, or tribe, nominally follows only 797
the way of Jesus.

A parallel was then applied to aboriginal Junkgowa, for the old men agreed that some of their ancient habits based on the Junkgowa were not all that they could be; their acceptance of feuds, tribal-killings, and infanticide. All that is good in aboriginal law (and much of it is good and noble as far as it goes) can thus be completed by Jesus, who came from Wangarr, not only to teach white men, but aborigines as well.

An obvious weakness in this approach is the nomad's indefinite conception of Wangarr, but there is also great value in the term, in that it is familiar and scarcely less vague to the aboriginal mind than the primitive Hebrew conception of the 'Eternal', as found in the early pages of the Bible. Similarly, Wangarr can be filled with Jesus' conception of 'God the Father' without doing damage to aboriginal culture. No cleavage becomes apparent, except that killings, due to ignorance and superstition, are disappearing, and new life and vigour are infusing their ancient but stagnant nature-religion. A new racial vigour arising from applied Christianity, and including all that is best in modern civilization, is affecting nomadic economic life, so that the change from nomads to agriculturists has already begun, a simple monetary system has been introduced to replace barter, the standard of life and living conditions are improving as nomads apply their knowledge of arts and crafts to new remunerative industries, and regular education in the schools is profoundly and advantageously affecting a strictly aboriginal culture in the rising generation.

One of the Yulengor toiling with me on the rocky Yirrkala headland voiced the question in every mind: 'Bapa, why are we digging this hole?'

'So as to erect a maraian' (sacred totem) 'in it.'

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Incredulously the men paused from their digging: 'Maraian? But if we put it here on the headland, the women and children will see it.'

'Yes. This is the Jesus-Totem; it is the biggest Totem of all. Everyone can look at it because Jesus is the Saviour or "Ancestor" of women and children as well as of men. When we look at it we think of Him; we call it His Cross.'

Wondering greatly they returned to their work. For five years these men had heard the Christian gospel of peace and good-will, and to some extent had grasped its sublime bearing on their ageless feuds, tribal-killings, and fears. It was now felt that the use of this symbol would bring implications of the Gospel more realistically to their minds. So a tall swamp-tree was hand-squared into a Cross about forty feet high, dragged through the jungle and raised on the Yirrkala headland. Towering over native camps and all the mission, it is visible for several miles; all who make their way to Yirrkala by bush-track or canoe realize that they are coming to the 'Cross-wanga' or Cross-camp. With a visible Cross on the headland it was easier to talk about it to a people whose minds were steeped in symbolism, who live in the past, and whose history, beliefs, and myths are linked to visible totem centres.

A young American airman pursued attacking bombers far out over the Arafua Sea, till lack of petrol forced him to turn back. When some miles off-shore, his petrol gave out, and he was forced to parachute into the sea. He was washed ashore unconscious on Bremer Island. In the early morning the airman was literally stabbed into consciousness, and found two naked nomads standing over him with a spear held determinedly to his ribs.

'You Jap?' they asked in broken English.

'My God!' gasped the airman, 'no, I'm American.'

He said later that the nomads 'jabbered' together, undecided what to do, for neither of them had heard of

Americans nor understood his accent. Their looks were menacing, till one Yulengor saw a miniature Cross round the airman's neck; whereupon, with unmistakable friendliness, he dropped his spear, and pointing to the Cross said: 'Jesus! This number-one man.' That was enough for them; the pilot was helped to his feet, given water and food and made to realize that he was among friends.

From Bremer Island it is twelve miles by sea to Yirrkala, but the trip is a slow one by canoe, so the Yulengor crossed to the mainland and guided and sometimes carried the airman through the bush to the mission. From the top of the highest hill on the track they tried to point out the mission station, but all he could see on the rugged headland, towering above what otherwise might have been inhospitable jungle, was a broad white Cross.